

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



Archeological remains point to Mayan civilization dating back as far as 2,600 B.C. Many of their pyramids and structures still stand magnificently today as a testament to their great temporal advancement, which, in many ways, parallels and rivals that of ancient Egypt.

Aztecs & Mayans **The End of an Empire**

13 The Mayan Calendar:
Credible or Questionable?

16 Prophets Sent to the Americas

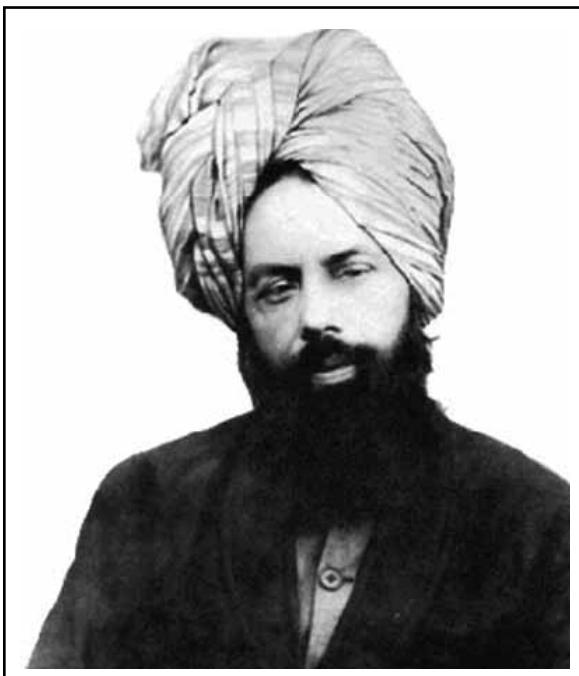
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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 195 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God’s prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or ‘may peace be upon him,’ and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaahi wasallam* or ‘may peace and blessings of God be upon him.’ Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or ‘may Allah be pleased with him/her.’ While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY
United States of America

*Muslims who believe in the Messiah,
Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Qadiani^{AS}*



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**For More Information on
Islam/Ahmadiyyat:**

**Alislam.org
Ahmadiyya.us
or
1.800.Why.Islam**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Chapter 14, Surah Ibrahim 14:10

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبْؤَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ
قَوْمٌ نُوحٌ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودٌ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ
بَعْدِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّهُ طَجَّاءَ تُهْمَمْ
رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَدُوا أَيْدِيهِمْ فِي
آفُوا هِمْ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا
أَرْسَلْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَلٍّ مِمَّا
تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٌ ۝

الثانية

Have not the tidings come to you of those before you, the people of Noah, and the tribes of 'Ad and Thamud, and those after them? None knows them now save Allah. Their Messengers came to them with clear Signs, but they turned their hands to their mouths, and said, 'We disbelieve in that with which you have been sent and surely, we are in disquieting doubt concerning that to which you call us.'

Belief in Spiritual Entities

"Hence the fact of the matter is that just as the sun keeps to its orbit and its heat and light continues to envelope the earth and benefits each and everything in accordance with the capacities of each, the same is true about spiritual entities.

Call them what you will; for instance, celestial spirits after the Greeks or, in terms of the Avesta and Vedas, call them spirits of stars or in the simple and straightforward manner of those who believe in One God, call them God's Angels.

The fact remains that these strange beings, each in its own particular station, are staying put and holding fast. In the infinite wisdom of God Almighty these spiritual entities are busy serving everything that exists on earth and has potentiality and are helping everything attain its desired goal to the fullest extent.

The functions they perform are both visible and invisible. Just as our bodies and overt functions are influenced by the sun, the moon and other planets, all these Angels too are exerting their perspective influence on our hearts, minds and indeed all our spiritual functions in keeping with our respective capacities. Be it a particle of dust or a drop of water that enters an oyster shell, or the womb of a mother, through the spiritual influence of these Angels of God it is transformed into a ruby, a sapphire, a diamond, a highly lustrous and large pearl, or a human being with great qualities of head and heart.

The Avesta, considered by the Magian to be their revealed scripture, claims that it was revealed way back



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

sometime in remote antiquity a billion times earlier than the Vedas. By this reckoning, the Vedas, whose age has been approximately fixed at a billion and nine hundred and sixty million years, are not fractionally antique. On the contrary, the Avesta for its part claims to be as much as three trillion years old. Indeed, ours is only a modest estimate for the Avesta's own claim is that it is not three but three hundred trillion years old. Now this scripture not only describes spirits pertaining to stars and other heavenly bodies as Angels, but also enjoins that they should be worshipped*. The Vedas too repeatedly highlight the praise these spirits not merely as intermediaries but as beings to whom prayer must be offered. Of course, the possibility is there that such unholy teachings might have been added and interpolated quite like so many other false teachings. For instance, the teaching that this universe is without a creator, or that every existent in terms of its matter and spirit is eternally original, self-existent, and its own god, or the teaching that there is no escaping the vicious circle of reincarnation, or the teaching that a married woman who happens to be without male issue is permitted to cohabit with a stranger with a view to begetting a son, or the teaching that eternal salvation is impossible even for the saintly including the *rishis*, or the saints to whom the four Vedas are reported to have been revealed. Nor, for

that matter, can they ever earn the permanent title to be remembered with an enduring reverence and respect. Instead, it is quite possible that getting caught in the cycle of birth and rebirth, they may well assume the shape of an animal and cease to be human. Indeed this metamorphosis may well have actually taken place. According to their warped thinking when a person is spiritually superior to an *Autar* or even the *rishis* of the Vedas, it is not only possible but necessary for him since it is inexorably laid down under their laws of Nature, that he should be reborn as a mere insect or an extremely foul and obnoxious animal belonging to some minor species of the animal kingdom. Needless to say that all such teachings are spurious and have been concocted by those who were evil-minded and mentally sick. According to them it was not permissible for mankind in general to indulge in all kinds of shameful misdeeds and suffer shameful metamorphoses, they also allowed that prayers could legitimately be addressed to spirits inhabiting stars, and that they should be worshipped as one worships God. But the Holy Quran throws open all avenues to the pure and unalloyed belief in the Oneness of God. It does not allow missing God's worship with the worship of any other creature. Nor does it believe in a God whose authority is imperfect and weak and who is not the source and fountain of all existence. Nor, for that matter, does it allow us to let any other evil enter and infest our social fabric.

*Angels are known as "Mala'ik" because they sustain the heavenly as well as earthly bodies. In other words, they are like souls in the context of the creation and survival (of these bodies). Another reason for calling them *Mala'ik* is because they function as messengers.

'Elucidation of Objectives' page 28 to 31, for full text of the book go to alislam.org

Editorial

Learning important lessons from past civilizations

“... And there is no people to whom a warner has not been sent.” (35:25)

Lhe Holy Qur'an repeatedly instructs us to travel and spread out in the earth and see what happened to the great powers before us. These nations had great armies, lofty buildings and secular knowledge far in advance of their times.

Thousands of years later, modern architects and engineers cannot determine how the Pharaohs built the pyramids of Egypt; how huge stones were put together so tightly with such precision. The size of these pyramids is another mystery. How could they have done this without the use of modern cranes? Another mind shaking discovery is the angles and shapes of these pyramids as related to the sun and the stars. How did they calculate the physics, math and astrology with such accuracy? The issue that the Holy Qur'an raises is to go and see what the end of these great nations was.

The Holy Qur'an mentions the names of some of the other powerful

nations such as Thamud and Aad. They built their houses carved in the mountains and felt safe. Today, the world does not know who they were and where they existed. Most people today are not even aware of their names. That in itself points to the message that the Holy Qur'an is making for us.

Another point that the Holy Qur'an makes is that God sent messengers in every part of the world and God never destroys a people unless a messenger has been sent to them as a warner.

Pharaoh's downfall came when they refused to accept Moses^{as} as the messenger of God. Under the same tradition, the destruction came to other nations after they refused to accept the messengers of God due to their arrogance and their worldly powers.

In this issue, we cover a few historical aspects of some of the great nations in Central America such as the Mayans. Under the suggestion of the Holy Qur'an, we should look and see why they are not there anymore.

In our time, God has sent Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian as the Promised Messiah, a messenger giving us the glad tidings that we can better our lives and be closer to God by following the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} which are in the Holy Qur'an. It is up to the great powers of the world today to accept him or follow the dreadful path of the nations in the past.

We hope and pray that they follow the right path and become the people who were rewarded by God instead of taking the path of those who received His wrath or went astray. Amen

Another point that the Holy Qur'an makes is that God sent messengers in every part of the world and God never destroys a people unless a messenger has been sent to them as a warner.

The Friday Sermon

Hadrat Mirza Mahmud Ahmad (1889-1965)

A leader who made a difference in the world



Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, delivered the Friday sermon at the Baitul-Futuh Mosque in London February 17th, 2012. The main subject of his sermon was the great prophecy of Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah^{as} and Mahdi, concerning the Promised Reformer (Muslih Mau'ud).

The Khalifatul-Masih V, may Allah be his support, said that only that religion is a living religion which continues to manifest God's powers. Today, only Islam meets this criterion and only in Islam God communicates with man, responds to prayers and manifests his powers. To manifest His powers in this age, He sent His Messiah in the world in accordance with related prophecies. All favors, now, will be bestowed only through the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}. Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani^{as} was the perfect lover of the Holy

Prophet Muhammad^{saw} sent in this age for the revival of Islam.

He said that the Promised Messiah^{as} prophesied about events which only could have been known by the Almighty to happen in future. The world witnessed the fulfillment of these prophecies. The Promised Messiah^{as} was greatly affected by the objection of adversaries on the pristine teachings of Islam and prayed fervently before the Almighty for signs in support of His faith. The Promised Messiah^{as} was guided by the Almighty to go to the town of Hoshiarpur in India for a forty-day retreat of prayer and worship which resulted in the Almighty favoring the Promised Messiah^{as} with the sign of a promised son known among the Ahmadis as the Prophecy of the Muslih Mau'ud (Promised Reformer). This prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Hadrat Mirza Mahmud Ahmad (1889-1965), the second successor to the Promised Messiah^{as}.

The Khalifatul-Masih V read the words of the prophecy which explain the purpose

and details of the prophecy that He will favor the Promised Messiah^{as} with a handsome son who will have exceptional qualities, will serve the cause of Islam in a splendid manner with lasting impact on its progress and spread in the world, will benefit the oppressed, will excel intellectually and spiritually, will attain fame to the corners of the earth, and nations will be blessed through him.

He said that the Khalifatul-Masih II announced in 1944 that he himself indeed was the one who was promised in this prophecy. Yaum Muslih Mau'ud (The Promised Reformer Day) is celebrated in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community every year so that members become familiar with the details of the fulfillment of this great prophecy. It is not a birthday celebration as it is celebrated on the day of the prophecy (February 20, 1886) and not the day of the birth of the blessed son which was January 12, 1889. This prophecy was for the second revival of

Islam and has the status of a milestone in this respect.

The Khalifatul-Masih V mentioned that there were 52 aspects of the prophecy. He explained whom the Promised Messiah^{as} designated as the Promised Reformer by quoting from a number of writings of the Promised Messiah^{as}, which elaborated on how the Almighty had informed the Promised Messiah^{as} of the births of his promised son and other sons and how those prophesies were fulfilled.

The Khalifatul-Masih V explained that Hadhrat Muslih Mau'ud was Caliph for 52 years and his Caliphate is a shining proof of the fulfillment of this prophecy. The speeches and writings of the Muslih Mau'ud reflect his concern for the condition of the Muslim populace and his intellectual and spiritual service to the Islamic world and Islam. The 52 (or, in another view, 58) aspects of the prophecy are evident in the person and the life of the Muslih Mau'ud.

The Khalifatul-Masih V, may Allah be his support, explained how the Muslih Mau'ud at the young age of nineteen determined to carry out of the work of the Promised Messiah^{as} and pursued this objective throughout his life selflessly and with full vigor and attention and realized success with the grace of the Almighty against all adverse mischief, machinations and plots. The Muslih Mau'ud also advised the members of the community to carry out their duties with the same determination, spirit and zeal that the carrying out of the mission of the Promised Messiah^{as} is their personal sole responsibility. If every member works with such zeal, their difficulties will become light and insignificant for them. Our purpose is to establish the superiority of Islam by creating unity among Muslim states, and establishing equity and justice in the world and protecting rights of every person.

The worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community said that our objectives are noble and to accomplish them we will have to make significant efforts and bring about pristine changes among ourselves and establish a contact with our Lord and create love of Islam and love of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}. This prophecy signified that the mission of the Promised Messiah^{as} will not be limited to his life but rather will extend beyond his time and will extend to the last days through the manifestation of



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We have to make the message reach Libya, Syria and Egypt that if they continue to follow tribal politics, they will shake the foundations of their own countries leading to disintegration and ultimately, slavery, and ask them to ponder over the message of the one sent by God for this age for their benefit.

the second power, that is, Khilafat. While this prophecy stands as the proof of the truth of the Promised Messiah^{as} as the promised son established a system for the administration of the Community and established systems for the propagation of Islam, its results appear every day with a new manifestation.

Every Ahamdi has a role to play to strengthen this system. They should realize that they have not to limit reformation to themselves but have to cater for their next generations too that they also never forget their purpose of establishing the Oneness of God in the world and be prepared for every sacrifice in this respect and not rest until this purpose is attained.

We have to make every Muslim country and every Muslim aware of the mission and purpose of the advent of the Promised Messiah^{as}. We have to make them realize that their dignity and respect lies in unity.

This is the message we have to deliver to them. We have to make the message reach Libya, Syria and Egypt that if they continue to follow tribal politics, they will shake the foundations of their own countries leading to disintegration and ultimately, slavery, and ask them to ponder over the message of the one sent by God for this age for their benefit.

**He who believes
in Allah and the
Last Day should be
beneficent towards
his neighbor; he who
believes in Allah and
the Last Day should
honor his guest;
he who believes in
Allah and the Last
Day should say that
which is good else
remain silent.**

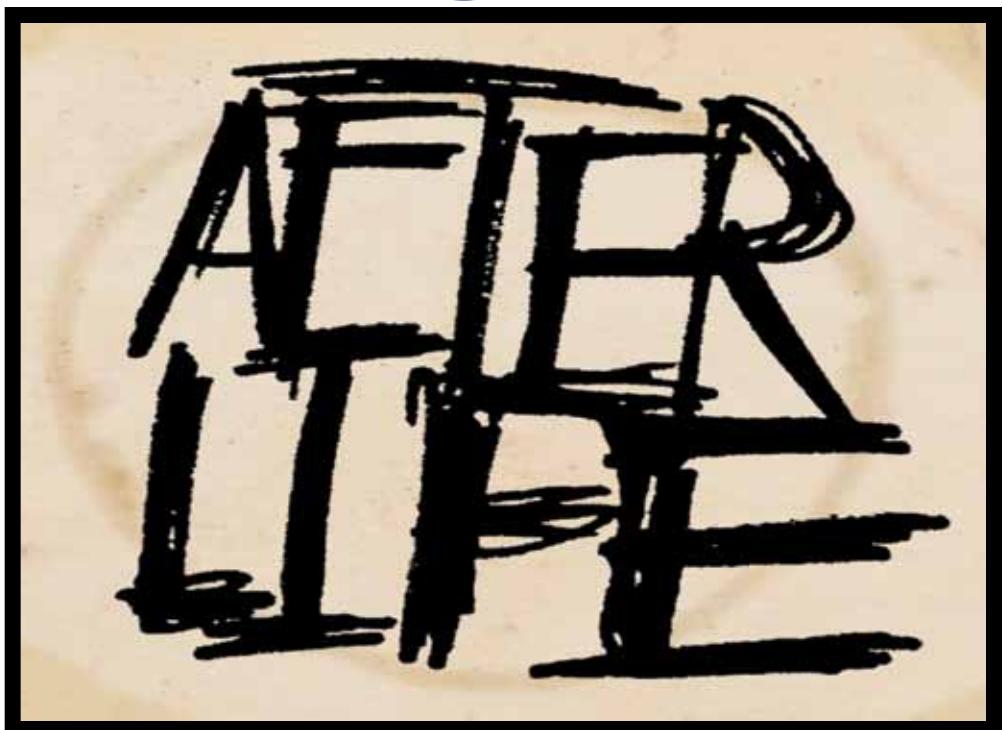
Aztec beliefs in the afterlife: Stephen Hawking and me.

By Zia H Shah MD

Stephen Hawking in a recent interview claimed that there is no heaven. A belief that heaven or an afterlife awaits us is a “fairy story” for people afraid of death, Stephen Hawking has said. In a dismissal that underlines his firm rejection of religion, Britain’s most eminent scientist said there was nothing beyond the moment when the brain flickers for the final time.¹

I beg to differ! I believe that there is a life after death. Neither Hawking nor I have returned from the hereafter and have no eye-witness testimony to present. Additionally, afterlife, heaven and hell are beyond time, space and matter and so, outside the scope of a scientific study. However, I have some philosophical arguments to present to Hawking or any other agnostic. Firstly, there are the revelations of the prophets and saintly people, both in the Islamic and Christian tradition and it is foolhardy to deny them summarily, as there is so much in human culture that we accept on the basis of human testimony. This is, however, not the argument that I want to focus on in this article. Secondly, there is a large body of literature about near death experiences, but that is also for another day.

So, I move to present two arguments that are mentioned in the Qur'an, but can



“Allah is He Who raised up the heavens without any pillars that you can see. Then He settled Himself on the Throne. And He pressed the sun and the moon into service: each pursues its course until an appointed term. He regulates it all. He clearly explains the Signs, that you may have a firm belief in the meeting with your Lord.” (Al Qur'an 13:3)

be presented on the basis of reason and rationality, rather than on the authority of revelation. If our universe is an accident and that is your world view and you do not stand in awe of the beauty, elegance and organization of this universe then Hawking is right for you. But, if you are agnostic, at least to some degree and are amazed at the beauty and organization of our universe as Albert Einstein was, then Hawking is plain wrong for you. Here I present to you the verses of the Qur'an arguing the case for hereafter, on the authority of the elegance of the first creation:

“Allah is He Who raised up the heavens without any pillars that you can see. Then He settled Himself on the Throne. And He pressed the sun and the moon into service:

each pursues its course until an appointed term. He regulates it all. He clearly explains the Signs, that you may have a firm belief in the meeting with your Lord.” (Al Qur'an 13:3)

The Qur'an points to astronomy and physics in these verses as an argument. Elsewhere in the Qur'an, Allah extends this discussion to the domain of biology, including human life and plant kingdom that has provided us with food and fuel over the centuries. In other words the Quranic argument extends over the elegance of all natural phenomena as testimony to the possibility and for the believers certainty of the next creation. Allah says:

“Does not man see that We have created him from a mere sperm-drop? Yet lo! he is

an open quarreler! And he coins similitudes for Us and forgets his own creation. He says, ‘Who can quicken the bones when they are decayed?’ Say, ‘He, Who created them the first time, will quicken them; and He knows every kind of creation full well. He Who produces for you fire out of the green tree, and behold, you kindle from it. Has not He Who created the heavens and the earth the power to create the like of them?’ Yea, and He is indeed the Supreme Creator, the All-Knowing. Indeed, His command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, ‘Be!’, and it is. So Holy is He, in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things. And to Him will you all be brought back.” (Qur'an 36:78-84)

The simple, yet elegant reality that we are able to burn wood as fuel is a proof of creativity of the Creator and a clue to His ability of second creation. There are additional verses of the Qur'an on proof from design for afterlife:

“Do they not see that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, has the power to create the like of them?” (Qur'an 17:100)

“Among His Signs is this that you see the earth lying withered, but when We send down water on it, it stirs and swells with verdure. Surely He Who quickens the earth can quicken the dead also. Indeed, He has power over all things.” (Al Qur'an 41:40)

Now, I move to my second argument, which is mentioned in the Qur'an as well. As all humans are God's creation, it stands to reason that God not only guided people in the Middle East through Abraham, Isaac, David, Solomon, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Jesus, but, He also guided other people through prophets like Confucius, Buddha and Zoroaster. If this be true there should be some common theme between their teachings, a common thread, a clue that these teachings are all emanating from a common source, one and the same glacier feeds all these rivers of wisdom. This is not my idea, but is presented by the Qur'an:

“Surely, it is for Us to provide guidance.” (92:12) Guidance and Law were given to every nation of the world through His Messengers, “And for every people there was a Messenger” (10:47). “And there is a Guide for every people.” (13:7) “And We did raise among every people a Messenger.” (16:36)

When we study anthropology we find Quranic claims to be precisely true. Some concept of afterlife has existed not only in all well known religions but also in all primitive religions. Robert Wright writes



Aztec Art Decoration

in the *Evolution of God*, talking about religion in primitive people, “There is always an afterlife, in hunter-gatherer religion, but it is almost never a carrot or a stick. Often everyone's spirit winds up in the same eternal home.”²² Reverend George Aaron Barton Ph.D. (1859 — 1942), was a Canadian author, Episcopal clergyman and professor of Semitic languages and the history of religion. He writes in the first chapter of his book titled, *The religion of the primitive people*, in his well known book, *The religions of the world*:

“The psychological unity of man is one of the most striking results of modern investigation. There are, of course, details in which the religion of any people differs from that of every other people. Indeed, in some respects the religion of every individual is peculiarly his own; it differs in some details from the religion of everyone else, for the facts of the universe impress each mind differently. Nevertheless the variations are far less than one would expect. The surprising fact is that in all parts of the world the minds of men, as they react to the fundamental facts of existence, work in so nearly the same way. This likeness of the psychological processes of man is one of the most striking discoveries of modern times.”

Are there religious implications of this psychological unity of mankind? Is it possible that many of the details have been inspired

if not revealed? More specifically he writes about life after death:

“Life after death is another of man's universal beliefs. It is only among a few modern thinkers, in whom the elemental intuitions are ‘sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,’ that it has ever been doubted. The universality of man's faith in the survival of the soul after death is attested in part by the universality of the belief in ghosts, and in the uniform practice of placing food in the tombs of the departed. Among all peoples, whether in the two Americas, in Central Africa, in Australia, or among the ancient inhabitants of Egypt or Palestine, not only food and drink, but the utensils that the departed had used in life were buried with him. Along with quantities of delicacies Queen Tai, of Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty, placed in the tomb of her parents splendid easy chairs, a bed, chests of clothing, and even a chariot in which they might ride! Similarly the Indians bury with their brave his bow and arrows for use in the happy hunting-grounds beyond the setting sun.”

Evidence of afterlife in the well known religions of the world including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Jainism, Hinduism, Shinto religion, Buddhism, Zoroasterism and primitive Egyptian religions will be linked in the web version of this article. Here, we will examine evidence of afterlife in Aztec religion only.

Aztec and Maya culture as it existed before the Spanish conquest of South America has been popularized in Mel Gibson's movie *Apocalypto*. In this American epic action-adventure film, set in Yucatan, Mexico, during the declining period of the Maya civilization, *Apocalypto* depicts the journey of a Mesoamerican tribesman who must escape human sacrifice and rescue his family after the capture and destruction of his village. The popularization of this culture of human sacrifice makes it easy for us to talk about Aztec religion. Afterlife of a person in Aztec religion was based mostly on how they died. In ancient Aztec religion, some would eventually be reincarnated as birds or butterflies, or eventually humans. Some would be, for a time, disembodied spirits roaming the earth. Most at some point would have to make the long journey through the nine levels of the underworld. People would be buried in a squatting position, with items that would help them in their journey.³ Lorna Dils of Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute writes about Aztec Mythology:

"The Aztecs believed in a heaven and an underworld. There were thirteen levels of heaven and nine of the underworld. There were also four horizontal points which corresponded to the directions of the compass and were associated with the four creator gods. All beings were assigned to one of these four points, depending on the day one was born. ... The Aztecs believed that where you went after death depended upon what you did on earth and how you died. The eastern paradise, the 'house of the sun' was the home of the souls of warriors who were killed in combat. This also included the souls of enemy warriors who had a special 'god of the enemy dead.' Sacrificed victims went there also. It was believed that souls stayed in the eastern paradise for four years, and then they returned to earth as hummingbirds or other exotic birds.

The western paradise, the house of corn, was believed to be for women who died in childbirth. They also returned to earth as phantoms of bad omens. The paradise of Tlaloc, the southern paradise was for people who died of lightening, leprosy or other sickness. This was a place of plentiful food.

The paradise of the north was for the rest of the dead."⁴

George Aaron Barton expounds the universality of religion and a universal belief in soul, in his book, *the religions of the world*:

"The universality of religion is now generally conceded. Man is a worshiping animal; he is 'incurably religious.' Certain Australian tribes, reported on by Spencer and Gillen, appear at first sight to be exceptions to this rule, but a closer study of the facts leads one to believe that religion is not entirely absent. ... **The soul** is among all men intimately connected with religion. All tribes, even the lowest, observe that a human being is made up of two parts, the body of flesh and bones, and an impalpable something that lives within. This impalpable something, or soul, is called by various names, but belief in it is universal. Among the lowest Australian tribes it is not as well defined as among more advanced peoples, but the belief is still there, and a man's Murups or soul may, when he sleeps, go off and talk even with the Murups of the dead. Among savage peoples the soul is thought to have a material form. They cannot otherwise conceive of it."

The concept of soul was not absent among the Aztec. Lorna Dils also gives the Aztec accounts of the trials a soul must go through to get to Mictlan or paradise as follows:

"1) cross a deep river—dogs were buried with their dead owners to guide them on this journey.

2) pass between two mountains which were joined together

3) climb an obsidian mountain

4) pass through icy wind that cut like a knife

5) pass through a place where flags waved

6) be pierced by arrows

7) pass among wild beasts which ate human hearts

8) pass over a narrow path of stone

9) reach this level where the soul found rest."⁵

Epilogue

Universality of religion in all human cultures and societies, with emphasis on a supreme deity, in human soul and afterlife, is a pointer towards revealed nature of all religions, as they existed in their pure form, prior to corruptions introduced by human ignorance and power-plays. I conclude this article by

documenting Aztec's belief in the afterlife from Encyclopedia Britannica. Given all the anthropological information on the universality of religion, Stephen Hawking may want to reconsider his thoughts about afterlife. The Encyclopedia Britannica has the following to say about the beliefs of the Aztec concerning the other world and life after death:

"The old paradise of the rain god Tlaloc, depicted in the Teotihuacán frescoes, opened its gardens to those who died by drowning, lightning, or as a result of leprosy, dropsy, gout, or lung diseases. He was supposed to have caused their death and to have sent their souls to paradise.

Two categories of dead persons went up to the heavens as companions of the sun: the Quauhteca ('Eagle People'), who comprised the warriors who died on the battlefield or on the sacrificial stone, and the merchants who were killed while traveling in faraway places; and the women who died while giving birth to their first child and thus became Cihuateteo, 'Divine Women.'

All the other dead went down to Mictlan, under the northern deserts, the abode of Mictlantecuhtli, the skeleton-masked god of death. There they traveled for four years until they arrived at the ninth hell, where they disappeared altogether.

Offerings were made to the dead 80 days after the funeral, then one year, two, three, and four years later. Then all link between the dead and the living was severed."⁶

I have not had the privilege to meet Stephen Hawking in this life, but, I hope and will look forward to meeting him in the hereafter.

Endnotes

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The Mayan Calendar Credible or Questionable?

By Lubna R. Malik, J.D.

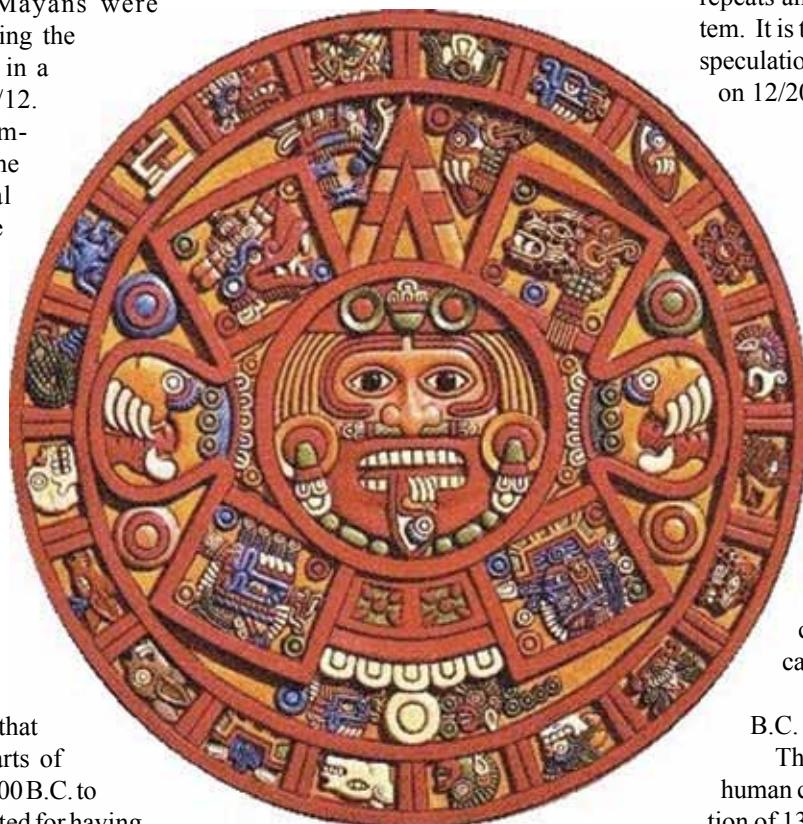
As we begin the year 2012, some wonder if the Mayans were correct in predicting the end of the world in a few short months on 12/20/12. Movies such as Roland Emmerich's 2012 suggest that the world will end by a global cataclysm. What was the ancient Maya calendar, how accurate was it, have any of its predictions proven true, and what about the 2012 prediction? This brief essay will answer these complex questions in an effort to better understand the ancient Maya and the reality of impending doom in December.

Who were the Maya?

The Maya was a civilization that encompassed Mexico and parts of Central America from about 2000 B.C. to the late 1600s. The Maya is noted for having the only fully developed written language in the pre-Columbian Americas, and for having complex art, architecture, and mathematical and astronomical systems. The Maya did not create the idea of writing, epigraphy, and the calendar, but the Maya civilization did fully develop these tools.¹ Calendars, for example, were most often found on massive monuments. Even after the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores in the 1500s, the Maya civilization did not disappear. Today, the Maya form sizeable populations throughout Mexico and parts of Central America, and many Mayan languages are still spoken.²

The Three Maya Calendars

There were three calendars in use during the Maya period of power. The *Haab'*, or the



365-day solar calendar, was used by both the Maya and Aztec civilizations. The *Tzolk'in*, or the 260-day calendar, was used by both the Maya and Aztec civilizations. These first two calendars only identified weeks and days, and the two calendars overlapped once every 52 years. The *Tzolk'in* was specifically used to designate when each god would be worshipped, in hopes of maintaining equilibrium among the many deities.

To designate dates over periods longer than 52 years, the third calendar, the Maya Long Count Calendar, was developed. The most well-known of the three calendars, it is the Maya Long Count Calendar that never

repeats and is on a base-20 and base-18 system. It is this calendar that is the source of the speculation regarding total world annihilation on 12/20/2012.

The Maya Long Count Calendar³

The Maya Long Count Calendar identifies each day by counting the number of days passed since the mythical creation date, which corresponds to August 11, 3114 B.C. on the Gregorian calendar.

The Maya calendar is based on the following:

The Maya believed that human civilization would last a total of 13 *b'ak'tun*, or 5126 Gregorian calendar years. Thus, in Gregorian calendar years:

Total # of Years – Years Elapsed in B.C. = Years in A.D. 5126 – 3114 = 2012

Thus, according to the Maya calendar, human civilization will cease at the completion of 13 *b'ak'tun* in the Gregorian calendar year of 2012.

How Accurate?

The Maya Long Count Calendar's accuracy as compared to the Gregorian calendar is done by correlation. The correlation that is accepted by all academics studying the correlation question is the Goodman, Martinez, Thompson GMT correlation of 584,283 days.⁴ Using this correlation, archaeologists have proven the accuracy of the Maya calendar in historical, astronomical, and archaeological contexts.

Historically, many of the Spanish conquistadores recorded dates on the Julian or Gregorian calendars. Those who have studied the base-20/18 structure of the Maya calendar have found that the Maya date for the fall of the capital city

of the Aztec civilization, Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City), corresponds to the Gregorian calendar date of August 13, 1521, as recorded by the Spanish conquistadores.⁵ Further, there were many civilizations in the time of the Maya that kept the *Haab'* and *Tzolk'in* calendars; when the correlation of 584,283 days is used, these calendars match the Maya Long Count Calendar.⁶

Astronomically, the Maya Long Count Calendar excellently matches lunar data.⁷ For example, an inscription on the Maya Temple of the Sun at Palenque, a Maya city-state in current-day southern Mexico, records a

At the end of each 13th *b'ak'tun*, one creation ends; a new creation begins at the start of the 14th *b'ak'tun*. According to the Maya, thus, the current creation will end on December 20, 2012, which is the end of the 13th *b'ak'tun*, and the new creation will begin on December 21, 2012, which is the beginning of the 14th *b'ak'tun*. There is only one known reference to the current creation's 13th *b'ak'tun* by the Maya.¹¹ This reference is found on Tortuguero Monument 6, which is located in the southernmost tip of present-day Tabasco, Mexico.¹² There are four main interpretations of the inscription:

1. Archeologists Grube, Martin, and Zender who have studied the inscription have said that the inscription refers "to the end of the 13th *b'ak'tun* which we will see in the year 2012... [the inscription says] 'it will happen' followed by something that we cannot read and 'he will descend yem...ta' followed by something..." this is not the

end of the world". Under this interpretation, someone or something is descending and a big change will occur, but not a cataclysmic world annihilation as depicted by Hollywood.¹³

2. Archaeologists Eberl and Prager have focused on the word "descent." According to their interpretation, the Maya used "descent" during building dedications, as on Temple XIV in Palenque, in current-day southern Mexico, to indicate a positive event. Thus, under this interpretation, whatever is happening at the end of the 13th *b'ak'tun* will be a big change, but it will be a positive change, not drastic destruction.¹⁴

3. Archaeologists Gillespie, Joyce, Houston, and Stuart have echoed the first interpretation, and have said that a calendrical event in the early 21st century [2012] will take place, "at which time, apparently, the god may 'descend.'" The "god" referred to is Bolon Yokte' K'uh, which is understood to refer to the Nine Lords of the Night. These Nine Lords are said to be a set of gods, or attributes, that encompass a perfect Being. These gods or attributes are fire, flint, youth, maize/bread, death, water, love, rain, and the mountains. Although these are nine gods or attributes, the Maya wrote and spoke of these nine gods through a single fixed letter, F. Thus, under this interpretation, at the end of the 13th *b'ak'tun*, the combination of

the aforementioned attributes, or the single all-encompassing entity F, will descend to the world and cause an immense change.¹⁵

4. Most recently, archaeologists Grone-meyer and MacLeod have interpreted the inscription as announcing the witnessing of the same Bolon Yokte' K'uh. According to their interpretation, this deity will be publicly displayed by the occasion of his investiture. This means that at the end of the 13th *b'ak'tun*, the combination of attributes, or F, will be publicly displayed to the world through a formal dress, adornment, throne, or a person who is the representative of the aforementioned combined attributes, or F.¹⁶

In addition to these four interpretations of the single inscription related to the 13th *b'ak'tun*, there are several Maya inscriptions that reference future predicted events or commemorations that will take place beyond the completion of the 13th *b'ak'tun* of the current era, thus suggesting that there is life beyond the Gregorian calendar year of 2012. Further, the ancient Maya celebrated the notion of reaching the end of a 13-*b'ak'tun* cycle; they did not fear it as a doomsday event or moment of cosmic shifting.¹⁷ The Maya believed there would be another cycle.¹⁸

Examining these four main interpretations along with the future Maya predictions and general Maya feelings towards the end of the 13th *b'ak'tun*, it is unlikely that 2012 represents a physical destruction of humankind. Instead, the Maya prediction suggests a great change in 2012 that will probably be spiritual because of its connection to the descent of F, or a god, or the celebration of a god through someone on Earth.

The Maya Prediction

This final section of this short essay is purely conjectural and a thought experiment for everyone. Assuming the interpretations of the Maya inscription regarding the end of the 13th *b'ak'tun* are correct, what might this mean to a Muslim? Perhaps the rise of the true Islam and a new spiritual change in the world to be celebrated?

First, Islam's fourth fundamental article of faith is belief in all prophets. The Holy Qur'an speaks of many prophets, but this list is by no means exhaustive. God Almighty says, "And for every nation there is a messenger."¹⁹ And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.²⁰" Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmadth, the fourth successor

Mayan Calendar	Gregorian Calendar
<i>k'in</i> – 1 day	1 day (0.00 years)
<i>winal</i> – 20 <i>k'in</i>	20 days (0.06 years)
<i>tun</i> – 18 <i>winal</i>	360 days (0.97 years)
<i>k'atun</i> – 20 <i>tun</i>	7,200 days (19.71 years)
<i>b'ak'tun</i> – 20 <i>k'atun</i>	144,000 days (394.36 years)

date in Long Count which correlates to lunar data. Additionally, the Dresden Codex, a pre-Columbian Maya book of the eleventh century that is considered to be the oldest written book in the Americas, contains an eclipse table which matches lunar data when using the GMT correlation of 584,283 days.⁸

Archaeologically, the Maya Long Count Calendar has been verified using isotope dating. This method consists of dating materials such as rocks based on the observed abundance of a naturally occurring radioactive isotope according to its decay rates. One such example of isotope dating that proves the accuracy of the Maya Long Count Calendar was done by the University of Pennsylvania in 1959, in which ten wood lintels from Tikal, one of the largest Maya archaeological sites, were carbon dated. The lintels were carved with a Maya date that corresponds to 741 A.D. on the Gregorian calendar using the GMT correlation. The University of Pennsylvania found through carbon dating that the lintels were 746 ± 34 years, thus substantiating the accuracy of the Maya Long Count Calendar.⁹

2012 as The End?

According to Mayan literature, mankind of today is living in the fourth world.¹⁰ The first three worlds were not suitable for humans.

of the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Community, explained that the Holy Qur'an makes it clear that every region of the world in every age was sent messengers and prophets from God.²¹ The Promised Messiah and Mahdi, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, explained that none of these religions were false at their source and none of the prophets were impostors.²² Thus, it is not a stretch to believe Maya predictions to be true and accurate.

Second, 2011 into 2012 has seen immense changes in the world. Millions in the Middle East have revolted against their despotic governments and set a new domestic order.²³ North American and European nations are experiencing terrible financial downturns, which to some are viewed as the worst ever in the history of modern society.²⁴ Major Western powers that were engaging in warfare throughout the world have withdrawn their forces to their own lands.²⁵ All material aspects of life have greatly changed on the large scale.

Third, there may be an analogous relationship to the numbers 13 and 14 in Islam. For the Maya, the end of the 13th *b'ak'tun* marked the end of an era, and the beginning of the 14th *b'ak'tun* marked the beginning of a new era. In Islam, the end of the 13th Islamic century was to mark the end of Islamic darkness, and the beginning of the 14th Islamic century was to mark the beginning of Islam's rise. At the end of the 13th Islamic century, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, made his claim to the world. With the beginning of Islam's 14th century, Ahmadiyyah began to grow and flourish through the system of *Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyyah*.²⁶

Fourth, there are numerous predictions by Muslims about events that will take place in the equivalent of the 14th *b'ak'tun*. Hadrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad^{rh}, the third successor of the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Community, has predicted that in years that fall in what happens to be the early 14th *b'ak'tun* there will be a sharp increase in the number and percentage of Ahmadi Muslims in the world. He even went so far as to predict that in some European countries, the populations would be majority Ahmadi Muslims.²⁷

Putting these four ideas together, could it be possible that in the 14th *b'ak'tun*, the world will experience a new spiritual order, as prophesied by the Maya? This new spiritual order will not result from worldly devastation, but from God's Message being made evident

to the whole world through the Promised Messiah, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, and his successors?

Purely conjectural, but one thing is for sure – 2012 is probably not bringing any Armageddon. But, it just might be the beginning of the golden age of the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Community.

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**The Prophet said,
"Religion is very
easy and whoever
overburdens
himself in his
religion will not be
able to continue
in that way. So
you should not be
extremists, but
try to be near to
perfection and
receive the good
tidings that you
will be rewarded;
and gain strength
by worshipping in
the mornings, the
nights."**

*Narrated Abu Huraira,
Volume 1, Book 2, Number 38:*

Prophets Sent to the Americas

“... And there is no people to whom a warner has not been sent.” (35:25)

By Abdur Rahim Hubbs

From this Quranic statement, we can be sure that Islam acknowledges the universal blessing of prophethood to all peoples of the earth. It is a basic feature of Islam that Allah communicates with His creation for their guidance and progress. The Qur'an calls His sending of messengers "... a Mercy from thy Lord." (44:6-7). Although the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community does not believe there could be any non-Muslim prophets after the Holy Prophet^{sa}, there are strong spiritual links to the pre-Islamic messengers sent to the Americas, as evidenced by saintly men, who inspired their people to believe as Muslims do. Divine inspiration continued to descend upon spiritual guides even though they were not prophets.

It is a well known statement of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} that there have been 124,000 prophets sent (*Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal*). Certainly, it is beyond the scope of the Qur'an to mention all such prophets and their dispensations. The vast majority of these Divine emissaries were sent with local, limited missions that pertained only to their specific time, people, and places. In addition, these nations conveyed their histories through oral traditions that lost purity with the passage of time or suffered destruction at the hands of their conquerors. As such, most are now forgotten. However, Allah has preserved the prophetic traditions of many significant messengers as a sign for humanity and to understand His True Religion and Way.

Among the world community, Native Americans are one such group that have a rich tradition of spirituality. Though largely ignored, marginalized, or even viciously attacked by Christian missionaries and conquistadors, some Native American traditions have been preserved and stand out as worthy of deeper study.

The Mayans

Archeological remains point to Mayan civilization dating back as far as 2,600 B.C. Many of their pyramids and structures still stand magnificently today as a testament to their great temporal advancement, which, in many ways, parallels and rivals that of ancient Egypt. And like the Egyptians, they too, de-

volved into a complex system of polytheism which included countless gods and idols, to which they offered barbaric human sacrifices.

With the advent of 2012, there is keen interest in Mayan prophecy, which is based upon the ancient Mayans' profound understanding of astronomy and astrology which recognized numerous cycles of time, some of which reached into thousands of years. One greatly sensationalized such cycle will be ending on December 21, 2012. Despite Hollywood films and websites bandying this ending cycle as the end of world, more level-headed experts on Mayan prophecy explain this as the entering of a new age - a belief that seems to align with Abrahamic and other prophetic traditions.

A much less hyped feature of Mayan history is the figure of Chilam Balam, "The Jaguar Prophet." Having lived in the last decades of the 15th and the first of the 16th centuries, Chilam Balam first prophesied the coming of white, bearded men arriving from the east. When the Spanish fleets arrived years later, Chilam Balam gained great notoriety and respect amongst his people.

The compilation of the Books of Chilam Balam contain many reformative teachings that clearly parallel Islamic principles and themes. Though the Mayans had generally become hopelessly polytheistic, he repeatedly focused on *Hunab-ku*, the Unseen Lord of the Universe: "The Chacs were not gods. The only true God is our Lord God ... He created everything on earth." (Book II, The Rise of Hunac Ceel to Power)

Chilam Balam simultaneously decried the condition of the Mayan temple priests as corrupt and lewd and equally condemned the new Christian faith being pushed by the invading conquistadors. Spanish priests would go on to ransack and burn stacks of hieroglyphic Mayan books and documents in their mission to purge and convert. The destruction of their books may be one of the reasons we know so little about their prophets and their beliefs.

The Great Peacemaker

If any of the known figures in Native American history are worthy of sainthood from the Islamic perspective, the *Great Peacemaker* Deganawida certainly fits the mold of a prime candidate. Born, some say of a virgin, in the Great Lakes area of North America most likely between 1400-1600 CE, Deganawida brought an unparalleled peace

and seemingly Divine government to the constantly warring tribes.

Not unlike the Arabs of the Prophet Muhammad's^s era, the tribes of Deganawida's day were locked in perpetual blood feuds and never-ending war. This situation is said to have become so awful as to have turned many warriors to cannibalism in a repulsive attempt to take on the powers of their vanquished foes.

In stark contrast to this disgusting mentality and behavior, Deganawida avoided the militaristic training of other youths and instead led a contemplative, preparatory life of solitude. Reaching manhood, he set out and announced his mission: I carry the Mind of the Master of Life, and my message will bring an end to the wars between east and west. The word that I bring is that all peoples shall love one another and live together in peace. This message has three parts: Righteousness and Health and Power. And each part has two branches.

Righteousness means justice practiced between men and between nations; it means also a desire to see justice prevail. Health means soundness of mind and body; it also means peace, for that is what comes when minds are sane and bodies cared for. Power means authority, the authority of law and custom, backed by such force as is necessary to make justice prevail; it also means religion, for justice enforced is the will of the Holder of the Heavens and has His sanction. It will take the form of the Longhouse ... Hereabouts are Five Nations ... They shall have one mind and live under one law. Thinking shall replace killing, and there shall be one Commonwealth.

Upon this teaching, Deganawidah would establish the Great Iriquois "5 Nations" and the democratic Longhouse system of government. This just system kept peace and served the 5 Nations for centuries and was recognized as a formidable force by the British, the early American colonists and eventually the US government. Many scholars now acknowledge that the 5 Nations democratic system influenced the thoughts of Benjamin Franklin and other Founding Fathers who had contact with the Iriquois 5 Nations Federation.

Before passing away, The Great Peacemaker gave some very vivid prophecies of things to come, one of which was that after a period of great trials from foreign "snakes," a bright light would come to

them from the east across the *Great Water*. He stated that this light would be his return to his people.

The Code of Handsome Lake

Born in 1735 in a Seneca village near Avon, New York, Handsome Lake was the brother of a famous historical figure called "Cornplanter" who helped broker a peace between George Washington and the 5 Nations Federation. Handsome Lake, conversely, had largely lived an unremarkable life and, like many of the Native Americans of his day, had become a sickly alcoholic. From 1796 to 1799, he was bedridden with wasting.

One day, by all appearances, he seemed to have expired. After several hours in a state that resembled death, someone preparing his body for burial felt warmth on his chest. With time, his body grew warmer until he finally regained consciousness, at which point he shared an amazing experience in which he stated that Gai'wiio, the Great Spirit and Creator, had sent messengers to him with a message of reform and regeneration:

"Now the messengers spoke to me and said that they would now tell me how things ought to be upon the earth. They said: 'Do not allow anyone to say that you have had great fortune in being able to rise again. The favor of the four (messenger) beings is not alone for you and the Creator is willing to help all mankind.'

At first, many scoffed - but with time, growing numbers began to heed the call to reform. Reminiscent of Quranic instruction, he taught regarding alcohol, "Good food is turned into evil drink." Handsome Lake sternly warned that alcohol incited to violence, sinful behavior and disease. He also taught that the spiritual messengers instructed him to forbid idolatry, stating:

"A man calls a dance in honor of some totem animal from which he desires favor or power. This is very wrong, for you do not know what injury it may work upon other people ... Tell your people that these things must cease. Tell them to repent ..."

Also forbidden were: witchcraft, charms, theft, bewailing the dead and excessive grieving, excessive song and dance, promiscuity and adultery, and gossip and mischief-making. Handsome Lake also instructed to eschew arrogance and greediness and be kind and helpful to humanity

as well as gentle and just with children. He directed to assist the poor and neighbors, pursue education and agriculture, and that leaders were appointed to do good for the people and that the higher their rank, the greater the consequences of their sin. He also gave vivid descriptions of Heaven and Hell, which, like the bulk of his teachings, seem to completely parallel the teachings of Islam.

As a reformer for the Iriquois Confederacy, Handsome Lake would be so successful with his mission that he would receive both a letter of recognition from and a personal audience with President Thomas Jefferson, who said, "I am happy to learn you have been so far favored by the Divine Spirit as to be made sensible of those things which are for your good and that of your people, and of those which are hurtful to you; and particularly that you and they see the ruinous effects which the abuse of spirituous liquors have produced upon them."

Handsome Lake died after a ministry of 16 years in which he helped reform many thousands of Native Americans. There are many adherents to his teachings till this day.

Conclusion

It seems safe to say that the universal Divine phenomenon of revelation and inspiration blessed indigenous Americans at times when they had not yet received the message of Islam but were, none the less, in states of

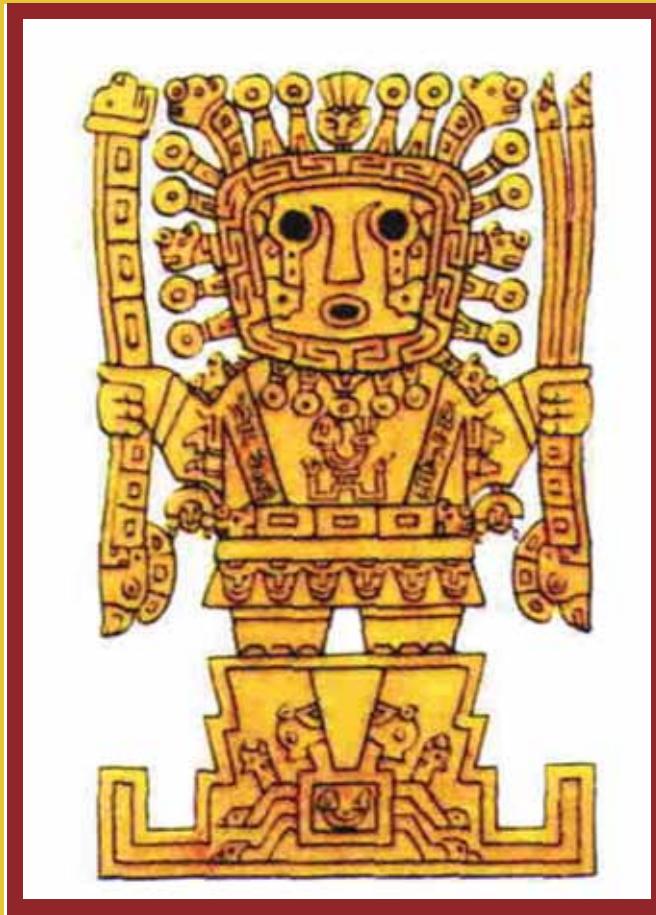
great need. As Allah is Most Merciful and hears the cries of His servants, Native American saints were raised to lead their people.

In essence, these saints preached the teachings of Islam and may have intended to pave the way for the *Light that was to appear from the east*. God Willing, the True Message of Islam will be heard and accepted by those who would be righteous amongst the great First Nations of the Americas, thus fulfilling the many prophecies of the revival of Native America. *Ameen.*

Abdul Rahim Hubbs, a former Catholic, is a licensed acupuncturist and practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine and an Ahmadiyya youth leader.



Finding Abrahamic God in Mayan Religion?



By Atif Munawar Mir

“So long as man exists, philosophizing of some sort occurs.”
Martin Heidegger’s words capture the human condition perfectly. Keeping them in mind, one may argue that the purpose of mankind’s philosophizing has been to find answers to these three eternal questions:

Who created the universe and humanity?
How should human beings behave & what is human nature?
What happens to human beings after death?

The beliefs, ceremonies and rituals of the Mayan civilization all suggest that it too struggled with these questions. The purpose of this article is to discuss the polytheistic rituals and beliefs of the Mayan civilization from a monotheistic perspective. If there is one God, how is it possible that ancient civilizations were polytheistic in nature? Why did these “primitive” civilizations worship multiple gods and sometimes carried out savage rituals such as human sacrifices? Did Abrahamic God not speak to the Mayan civilization?

Was Ancient Mayan Religion Monotheistic?

According to Islam, God sent 124,000 prophets to mankind. The Holy Qur'an states:

“There are no people (in the world) to whom We have not sent a Warner,” (35:25).

Based on this, some Muslims take the position that the rituals and beliefs of primitive civilizations such as the Mayans reflect the remnants, echoes and distortions of a divine revelation from a distant past. The ancient Mayan religion in its pure form, one may argue, was monotheistic. But this position is challenged by the findings of archaeologists and anthropologists which present the ancient Mayan religion as polytheistic.

According to Mayan belief, powerful supernatural beings controlled the Universe. The Mayans considered these beings divine entities.¹ These divine entities were “complex and contradictory beings” and “possessed multiple characteristics that blended together”.²

The Mayans placated these deities with rituals and offerings in order to prevent disasters and the end of the world.³ “When something did go wrong it was thought to be due to the anger of gods who had not been properly nourished”.⁴ “Thus a drought was explained as the anger of an offended rain god”.⁵ Religious rituals were a part of everyday life: “a mother might offer a bit of tortilla to *Ixchel* (the rainbow deity with benevolent aspects associated with health and birth) for the health of her child, or a farmer might make a quick prayer to *Chac* (the rain deity) to begin his day in the fields”.⁶ Despite the various deities, archaeologists believe that “one deity called *Itzamna*, might have been the one and central deity of the ancient Mayan religion”.⁷

Muslims believe that God has ninety-nine attributes. Is it possible that the Mayans also believed in one God, *Itzamna*, and the deities such as *Ixchel* and *Chac* were simply the attributes assigned to that one God? May be, with time the Mayans started to treat attributes as deities. “A famous scholar, Sir Eric Thompson, agreed with such a possibility and proposed that all other deities were but aspects of *It-*

zamna, a central deity of the ancient Mayan religion, making the Mayan religion in a sense monotheistic”.⁸

Mayan Belief about the Structure of Universe not Scientific

As per archaeologists, the Mayans believed that “the universe encompassed the Earth i.e. the visible domain, the sky above i.e. the invisible realm of celestial deities and *Xibalba* below, i.e. the invisible realm of underworld deities. The Earth rested on the back of a huge reptile, represented as a caiman or a turtle that swam in the primordial sea. Mountains were seen as the ridges on the back of this giant reptile. Caves were considered entrances to *Xibalba*. These were especially sacred and dangerous places where the dead were buried and special rituals for the dead were conducted. Doorways in some of the great Mayan temples were symbolic cave entrances that allowed kings and priests to enter the sacred mountain and communicate with the lord of *Xibalba*”.⁹

The Mayan view of the universe is obviously not scientific. This strange view of the structure of universe should not be perceived necessarily as an essential article of ancient Mayan religion. In some remote towns of the subcontinent, people of monotheistic faiths hold the view that the earth sits on one of the two horns of a buffalo. Earthquakes are the result of the buffalo shifting the earth from one horn to the other. Some people who hold this uncanny belief happen to be Muslims living in areas which lack educational facilities. So while some Muslims may believe this, there is no religious basis for such a belief. Nonetheless, some Muslims hold such views, primarily those, who have no access to a general education or any other means of acquiring scientific knowledge. Thus their understanding of religion is incomplete. And where religious understanding runs short, culture and mythology run strong. In such a situation, people explain their world by developing theories based on their imaginations, which in turn, is often nourished by their natural environment. If a religion does not explain the structure of the universe or believers are unaware of such an explanation, they develop their own beliefs regarding it and these beliefs often become a culturally shared phenomenon and are usu-

ally geographically peculiar. If the Mayan civilization explained the functioning of the universe in terms of animals and caves, this does not necessarily mean that their religion was as such. Cultural mythology and religion tend to differ and what a prophet may bring does not remain aloof as a philosophy but often becomes culturally reinterpreted (based on aspects of the natural environment of a group). The prophet brings the religion but it is the curiosity of the people and their unawareness that enables them to invent mythology around that religion. It is hard to tell how much of Mayan beliefs, available to anthropologists and archaeologists, reflects their religion or mythology.

Savage Rituals of The Ancient Mayan Religion

The Mayan practice that ran completely counter to modern cultural sensibilities was the ritual of human sacrifice. The victims of human sacrifice were war captives.¹⁰ This custom horrified Spanish invaders and their first reaction was to view the Mayans as savages. Indeed, the ritual is repulsive, and brings to mind the question, whatever the faith system why should God require human sacrifice? Unfortunately, the Mayans were not alone in their human tributes to their Almighty. Human sacrifice exists in all cultures, in one form or another. Even today, persons of all faiths kill friends and foes in the name of religion. In the midst of political battles, naked and violent human ambition often cloaks itself in the garb of religion to gain legitimacy and maximum loyalty. “The Spanish invaders, horrified as they were by the Mayan practice of human sacrifice conveniently overlooked their own practice of burning people alive in the name of religious orthodoxy”.¹¹ Prophet Jesus^{as} would have strongly condemned the violent Spanish conquest of the Americas. If the actions of the Spaniards cannot be held against the original teachings of Christianity then it is not fair to associate the Mayan ritual of human sacrifice with their ancient religion. The human sacrifice may have simply reflected political ambitions in the guise of religion.

Limitations of Anthropology & Archaeology

It is hard to arrive at definitive conclusions about the belief systems of the



Hunab Ku is the great primeval god of the Mayan culture, center of the galaxy, primordial and vital energy of all things, a shapeless divinity that created all. According to Mayan cosmogony, this deity manifested as a unique and absolute entity amongst all things.

Mayans because anthropologists and archaeologists have reconstructed the beliefs of the Mayans of the past based in part from “present-day Mayan beliefs and practices, combined with archaeological evidence and accounts from the time of the Spanish Conquest.”¹² The reconstruction of the past is a difficult and an interpretive exercise. Granted that archaeologists and anthropologists work with facts and scientific methods, but their tools are not always absolute. At some point, when facts are missing, archaeologists and anthropologists fill gaps with interpretation which are sometimes influenced by their personal view points and theoretical frameworks. Definite knowledge of the Mayan religion is not possible, not only because it is an old civilization but also because a significant portion of its recorded history has been destroyed. The Mayan civilization appeared around 100 A.D. and collapsed after blossoming around 900 A.D and then remerged in northern Guatemala and the Yucatan peninsula before collapsing in the mid fifteenth century. Mayan traditions came to an end leaving behind no indications of technology, lifestyle, and institutions except at the most elementary level. “What is left, instead were wondrous ruins”.¹³

The Spanish conquest led to the disappearance of the Mayan priests and the public aspects of the Mayan religion and with that went much of Mayan learning, including their writing system.¹⁴ “Mayan books were confiscated and burned. Fortunately, a few

native accounts survived, preserving a partial record of ancient Mayan religion and recorded knowledge.”¹⁵ What remained of the Mayan religion changed drastically when Christianity was imposed, sometimes forcibly, by the Europeans. To the Spaniards, Mayan priests were “agents of the devil and accordingly were converted, killed, or driven underground.”¹⁶ All these historical facts make it hard to recreate a complete history of the ancient Mayan civilization.

Conclusion

In western scholarship, monotheism is believed to have evolved from polytheism. This idea gives ammunition to atheists who paint religion as an invention of the human mind which has become more sophisticated with evolution. This article touched on some rituals and beliefs of the Mayans and has tried to show that one should be cognizant of the possibility that polytheism, instead of evolving into monotheism, was a distortion of monotheistic faiths of the distant past. This possibility might be discovered in the future as archaeological technology and anthropological data further develops. In the meantime, it is not against reason to keep one’s mind open to the idea that prophets of God have visited all peoples across the globe, in all ages, including the Mayans.

Endnotes

¹Sharer, J. Robert, “Maya Religion” in Daily Life in Maya civilization, Greenwood Press, 1996, p. 160

²Ibid, 160, ³Ibid, 164, ⁴Ibid, 164, ⁵Ibid, 164, ⁶Ibid, 164, ⁷Ibid, 160, ⁸Ibid, 160, ⁹Ibid, 155, ¹⁰Ibid, 168, ¹¹Ibid, 168, ¹²Ibid, 153,

¹³Roberts, J.M., World Apart”, History of the World, Revised Edition, Penguin Books 1987, p. 454

¹⁴ Sharer, J. Robert, p. 151¹⁵ Sharer, J. Robert, p. 151

¹⁶ Ibid, 151

*Allah's Apostle said,
“You will be
rewarded for
whatever you spend
for Allah's sake even
if it were a morsel
which you put in
your wife's mouth.”*

Narrated Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas

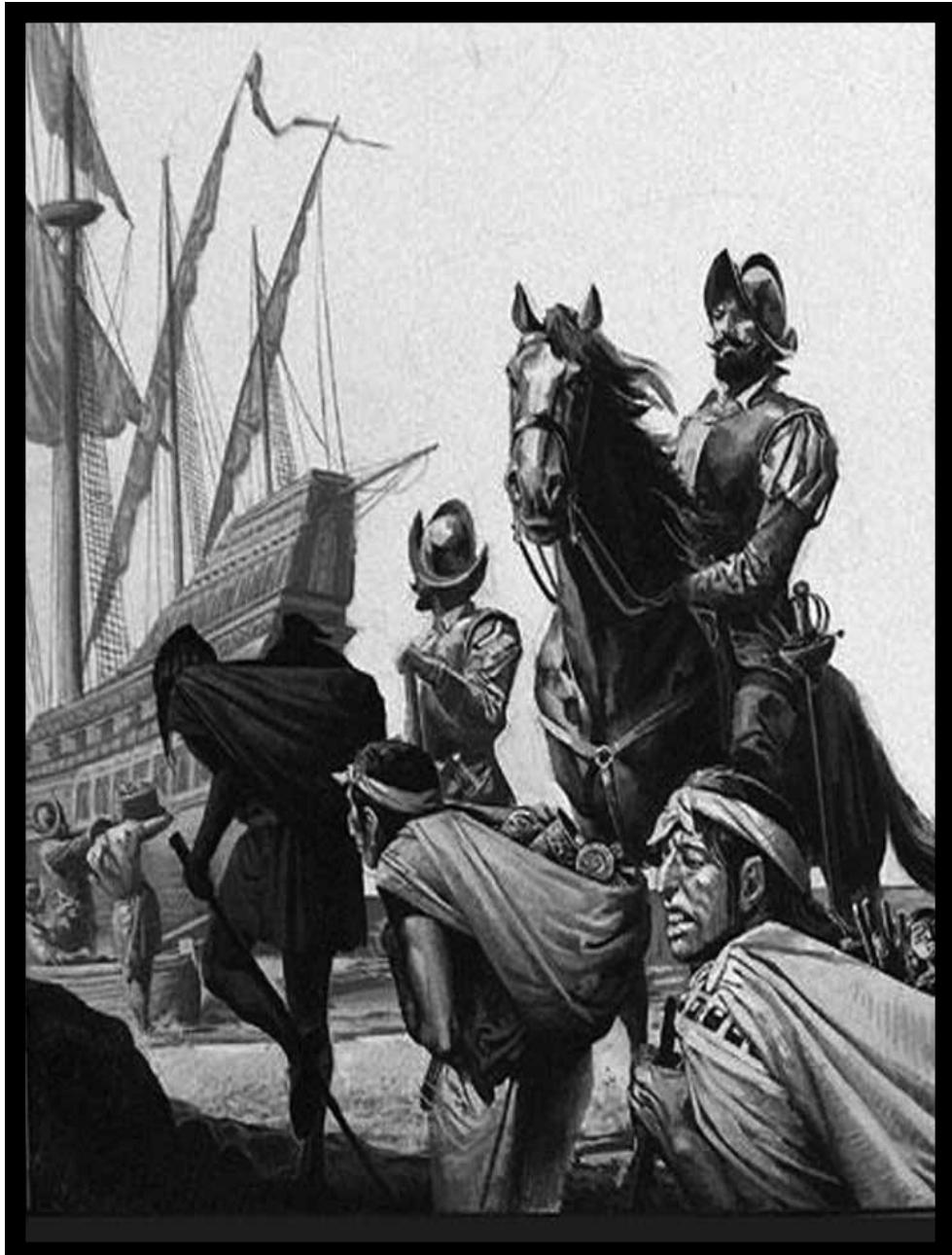
Volume 1, Book 2, Number 53

A Reign of Terror

Oppression Rooted in Falsehood

By Aasim Ahmad and
Naser-ud-Din Shams

Medieval Europe, with its newfound technology to destroy, could no longer withhold its insatiable appetite for materiality. Despots eagerly raced with one another in competition to carve up the world into colonies. Global civilizations were crushed with sword and psychology. Conquered nations were stripped of their wealth by force, and were antagonized by a false European sense of spiritual superiority. Although the European invaders attempted to cover up their greed with the cloak of Christianity, their betraying actions would expose them as the Bible's long-awaited Antichrist and Islam's *al-Masih ad-Dajjal*.



European Attitudes

"They go as naked as when their mothers bore them, and so do the women, although I did not see more than one young girl. All I saw were youths, no more than thirty years of age. They are very well made, with very handsome bodies, and very good coun-

tenances. Their hair is short and coarse, almost like the hair of a horse's tail. They neither carry nor know anything of arms, for I showed them swords, and they took them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance...They should be good servants and intelligent, for I observed that they quickly took in what was said to them, and

*The Europeans
not only ignored
“Indian” culture
and religion, but
refused to understand
it. They imposed
European cultural
and religious values
upon the “Indians,”
not to mention the very
misnomer “Indian.”*



I believe that they would easily be made Christians, as it appeared to me that they had no religion.”¹

These were some of Christopher Columbus’ first words describing the natives he encountered in the Caribbean. There is a clear tone of superiority and dominance over this newfound “other.” Columbus’s words truly represent the attitude the European explorers and conquerors held towards the people of the Americas. In fact, upon reflection, one will find a broad theme of tyranny and ignorance on the part of Europe towards the American natives. These attitudes eventually gave rise to the intolerance seen in the *The White Man’s Burden*, *Manifest Destiny* and *The Trail of Tears*. The Europeans not only ignored “Indian” culture and religion, but refused to understand it. They imposed European cultural and religious values upon the “Indians,” not to mention the very misnomer “Indian.” The real desire was to capture the wealth of America. The unfortunate irony and tragedy was amplified by the victims’ generally tolerant and hospitable attitude towards the Europeans. In contrast, the European perceptions of the natives were narrow, intolerant, and resulted in extreme violence, oftentimes taking the form of genocide and slavery. However, there was a small element

of European society that sought to defend the natives and protect them from inhumane treatment.

The Spanish Imposition...of Faith

One of the primary concerns of Columbus and the other explorers was the religion of the native peoples. This concern likely arose from Spain’s unconditional support and belief in Catholicism, as it was Spain that churned out many of the early explorers. Religion was one of the first things Columbus discusses in his original assessment of the native peoples. As expected, Columbus was concerned with religion because his expedition’s financial backers were staunch Catholics who could boast the fresh defeat of the “infidel” Moors. They were the champions of Christianity.

To illustrate how focused the Spanish explorers were on imposing the Christian faith, one need only look to the example of Hernán Cortés, the famous explorer known for ensuring the collapse of the Aztec empire. Immediately after arresting the emperor Montezuma and assuming control over the capital city of Tenochtitlan, Cortés ordered Christian images to be put up around the great pyramid of the

Aztecs, a temple of sorts.² Following this, Cortés set out to destroy the Aztec idols. Interestingly, Montezuma had suggested to Cortés that the Aztec gods might be placed on one side and the Christian God on another.³ This tolerant suggestion by an allegedly primitive native leads one to suggest the natives were not so primitive after all. However, Cortés would not hear such a thing and ultimately destroyed the Aztec empire.

The conversion effort was much harsher than what Cortés attempted to do with the Aztecs. Cortés was far more interested in Aztec gold than Aztec religion. The Christian missions focused exclusively on converting natives by any means necessary. The Christians of Europe were intent on “saving” the natives from their “primitive and savage” religion, which happened to have many more similarities than disparities with Christianity.⁴

In the latter half of the seventeenth century, Franciscan priests had infiltrated the “new world” attempting to spread their faith to the natives. However, the Franciscans did not take the time to understand those they wished to convert; rather they tended to use violence. It was easier and faster. For example, the Pueblo peoples of New Mexico, though showing interest in Christianity were

not given much of a choice; rather, the Franciscan priests ventured out and attacked all different kinds of Pueblo holy places and objects declaring the native religion to be pagan. The Pueblo people were forced to either accept Christianity (either sincerely or at face value) or to drive the missionaries out at the risk of death.

There are numerous accounts of natives being continuously abused by various types of Protestant missions. The inevitable result of these abuses was retaliation by the natives. The Pueblo people retaliated by revolting *en masse* against the Franciscans and the Spanish occupation. Remarkably, the natives triumphed and were free from conquest for a while longer. This kind of violence continued long past the seventeenth century. In 1847, the Cayuse natives of North America also took action against a violent Protestant mission and ended up destroying the mission entirely along with its founders.⁵ As a result of this violence, many native conversions to Christianity were not genuine spiritual transformations. On the contrary, it was a matter of survival.⁶

Ironically, natives who genuinely accepted Christianity began to preach a Christianity condemning the corrupt practices of the Europeans, which included the consumption of alcohol.⁷ Another effect of the Christian missions was the melding of native beliefs with Christianity. Natives eventually merged their own beliefs with the beliefs of the different Christian churches. The outcome of these different fusions was the growth of numerous different religions, each of which attempted to bridge the gap between Christianity and native practices. During the nineteenth century, the religious “melting pot” led to a number of self-proclaimed prophets amongst the different native tribes all of whom were attempting to restore stability and peace.⁸

The Christian missions introduced more confusion than clarity, and offered little to no spiritual benefit to the natives. Scholars who have comparatively studied Native American religions and Christianity have found interesting similarities and parallels, which could have been used to discover greater truths in religion; however, the Christian missions overlooked this opportunity. Instead, they blindly dragged as many native peoples as possible into the different folds of Christianity.

Religion was not the primary concern for most of the explorers and conquerors, and surely was not the concern of the Eu-

ropean monarchs. They had bills to pay and fortunes to make. For the secular rulers, God appears to have been a convenient excuse to get to the gold and glory. It was a choice to either live the life of *profits* or live the life of *prophets* – and the former was the obvious winner.

Considering Europe was far more technologically advanced than the American natives and was in absolute shock at the amount of wealth available in the “new world,” there is no doubt a humanitarian crisis was at hand. Up until this point in human history, from the 16th until the late 19th century, this was the worst humanitarian crisis. An entire race was nearly killed off by the greed and vice of another. The Europeans brought not only disease (e.g., syphilis), but their desire for material wealth. Along with their muskets, the Europeans were such a deadly force, the fact that any natives survived, except for reasons of slavery, is a miracle.

A common global strategy employed by the Europeans, especially the English, was to play tribes against one another by inciting tribal rivalries. The ultimate goal of this infighting was to clear land for further settlement. One of the bloodiest conflicts resulting from English incursions onto native homelands was King Philip’s War (1675-1676). A native chief of the Pokanokets tribe known as Metacomet forged an alliance with neighboring tribes in order to halt the English settlements. Unfortunately, the result was the death of five percent of the New England settlement population and forty percent of the native population. The English had also captured Metacomet’s wife and son and sold them into slavery.¹² This kind of violence continued throughout colonial history.

European Conscience Speaks

Amidst all the negative history, there are some positives. There were few who spoke

Another effect of the Christian missions was the melding of native beliefs with Christianity. Natives eventually merged their own beliefs with the beliefs of the different Christian churches.

The English people are an excellent example of the greed brought to America. The focus of the English was to acquire land. This is evident from the structure of their colonies. English colonies were built to be self-subsisting.⁹ Thus, there was every intent of staying on the land and gradually building more settlements pushing the natives further and further west. One example of Anglo-native relations involves the Roanoke area around present day North Carolina. The English were brutal to the local native tribe and did not stop at kidnappings or burning cornfields, but went as far as beheading the native chief.¹⁰ This violence occurred regardless of the English dependence on the natives for food. There is no surprise that the settlement at Roanoke, also known as “The Lost Colony,” was ultimately destroyed, all the settlers having disappeared.¹¹

out against the inhumane treatment of the natives. Perhaps the most distinguished is Bartolomé de Las Casas. Bartolomé was a Spanish priest and colonist who was a contemporary of Columbus. Originally a colonist, Bartolomé became a priest in response to witnessing the brutal treatment of the natives. In his *Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies* (1542), Bartolomé describes the treatment of the natives. He writes that:

[The] reason for killing and destroying such an infinite number of souls is that the Christians have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold, and to swell themselves with riches in a very brief time and thus rise to a high estate disproportionate to their merits. It should be kept in mind that their insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world, is the cause of their villainies. And also, those lands are so rich and felicitous,

the native peoples so meek and patient, so easy to subject, that our Spaniards have no more consideration for them than beasts. And I say this from my own knowledge of the acts I witnessed. But I should not say “than beasts” for, thanks be to God, they have treated beasts with some respect; I should say instead like excrement on the public squares. And thus they have deprived the Indians of their lives and souls, for the millions I mentioned have died without the Faith and without the benefit of the sacraments. This is a well known and proven fact which even the tyrant Governors, themselves killers, know and admit. And never have the Indians in all the Indies committed any act against the Spanish Christians, until those Christians have first and many times committed countless cruel aggressions against them or against neighboring nations. For in the beginning the Indians regarded the Spaniards as angels from Heaven. Only after the Spaniards had used violence against them, killing, robbing, torturing, did the Indians ever rise up against them¹³

Bartolomé encapsulates very passionately his sympathy for the natives and his antipathy for the Christians. It is clear Bartolomé felt a great opportunity for Christianity and learning was lost to selfish vice.

Bartolomé was passionate about the mistreatment of the natives and sparked the great debate at Valladolid, Spain, which took place in the mid-1500s. Defending the natives, Bartolomé argued the natives were civilized and capable of learning from the Europeans peacefully. It was argued that Christianity should not be imposed on the natives. Bartolomé spoke from experience that the natives were willing to accept Christianity and learn from it. Essentially, Bartolomé was advocating tolerance, opposing the notion that Christianity had to be forced onto others. Bartolomé said “No one, however, is punished for being bad unless he is guilty of rebellion. Where the Catholic faith has been preached in a Christian manner and as it ought to be, all men are bound by the natural law to accept it, yet no one is forced to accept the faith of Christ.”¹⁴

The Age of the Anti-Christ

Jesus^{as} warned the future Christians saying: “Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father Who is in Heaven. Many will say

to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out demons, and in thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then I will profess unto them, ‘I never knew ye: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.’ Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” [Matt 7:21 to 23].

Obviously, Jesus^{as} is referring to Christians for no other group prophesies and casts out demons in his name. Jesus^{as} is warning them that a time will come when they will have nothing to do with him outside of empty verbal claims. This was a warning to the future Christian nations that would forsake his true teachings and would pursue materiality.

European Christians had grown so bold that they ruthlessly persecuted or destroyed other Christian groups living in foreign lands, like the Portuguese did to the St. Thomas Christians in India. From Europe emanated a materialistic craving that sought to suffocate world cultures with its powerful tentacles – ultimately justifying its oppression by hiding behind the name of Jesus^{as}. This anti-Christian behavior would earn them the most notorious title in religious history: the *Anti-Christ* or the *Dajjal* as prophesied in Islam.

The European thirst for materiality was successful in subduing the culture of almost every country it entered except those inhabited by Muslims. So deeply engrained was *Tauheed* or the *Unity of God* in the blood of the Muslims, that they preferred death to the comforts that the *Dajjal* would offer. It was in this age that Islam’s finest warrior would arise and slay the Anti-Christ. Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} challenged the European missionaries and scientists to debate the critical issues that divided the Christian and Muslim nations. His victory is evidenced by the inability of the Europeans to weaken the faith of Islam, and their eventual retreat.

Conclusion

Bartolomé’s beacon would last for only so long and was not enough to change the hearts of men. He debated with Spanish scholars who argued that the natives were sub-human, created to be ruled by the superior Europeans. Unfortunately, the world knows what has happened to the native peoples. The outcome is a sad chapter in the world’s

history. Those who lived in the north are all but gone, left to live on reservations, and those from the south are few and far between, mostly forgotten. What started as an expedition to find a new route to India led to a cultural clash so long and harsh that no fruits were born from it. History shows Europeans did not learn their lesson and continued the same amoral aggression and exploitation into the jungles of Africa and the mountains of China. It is only in the present day that mankind is willing to recognize these massive atrocities and, perhaps, learn from them.

One of Bartolomé’s greatest critics, Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1492 to 1581), was a staunch proponent of the conquistadores. In justifying their terror and oppression, Díaz wrote in his *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España* or *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*, “We went there to serve God, and also to get rich.” Apparently, he wasn’t too well versed in the Bible for Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [i.e., material wealth]” [Matt 6:24].

In recording their oppressive attitudes towards the indigenous Americans, Europeans would forever remind the world how they justified their reign of terror with philosophies plagued by error.

Endnotes

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⁸ Deloria, 126-130.

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¹⁴ Bartolomé de las Casas. 1974. “In Defense of the Indians.” In defense of the Indians. Edited and Translated by Stafford Poole. Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press.

Naser Shams (General Secretary) and Aasim Ahmad (Nazim Atfal) are members of the Zion Jama’ah.

Avoid Suspicion for suspicion
is the root of falsehood; do not
occupy yourself with trying to discover
the shortcomings of others either
directly or through others, nor make
a fictitious bid at an auction nor be
envious of any. Do not entertain
feelings of **hatred** toward
another, nor cut asunder friendly
relations with any, be as brethren,
obedient to Allah.

Islam's Contribution to Science and Civilization

By Maulvi Abdul Kareem,

Retired Inspector of Schools, Bengal, India

It is now an undisputed fact that the early Muslims made incomparable contributions to the culture and civilization of the world. Far from proscribing free thought and enquiry and placing any ban upon the cultivation of science, as early and medieval Christianity did, Islam gave it a tremendous impetus by making it a part of religion itself. A Muslim was enjoined to look upon the universe as an expression of God's attributes, and he had to explore it and utilize its objects for the service of mankind as an item of worship of their Creator. It was this religious stimulus to scientific research that particularly impelled the early Muslims so zealously to exert themselves for the advancement of science. A detailed account of their numerous scientific achievements would fill many volumes. The more the world advances in civilization the more will their inestimable services to humanity be adequately realized and appreciated.



Europe's indebtedness to Islam for her scientific progress is much greater than she cares to admit. She remained barren of all progress as long as she was under the heel of the Church.

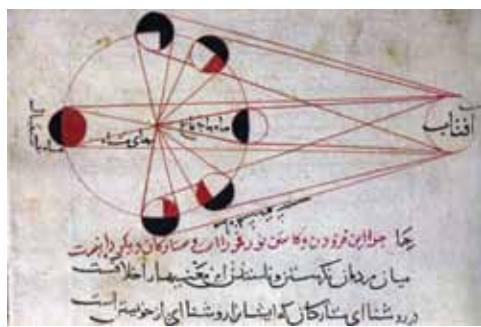
History bears witness to the fact that it was Islam that raised some of the most backward nations to the highest pinnacle of moral and material progress. Wherever the Muslims conquered a country, instead of slaughtering the vanquished, as was done by the Israelites of old, they gave them new life, inspired them with lofty ideals and raised them to a high level of civilization. Thus, indeed, were many savage

tribes transformed into civilized people. To whatever land the Arabs migrated they made it their home; they absorbed the culture of the conquered people and they did their best for the intellectual, moral and material movement of the land of their adoption. The people to whom the later intellectual development of the Muslims was due were, for the most part, not Arabs but descendants of those who had adopted

the faith of the conquerors. Wherever the banner of Islam was carried, remarkable centers of learning sprang up in no time and produced illustrious men in the fields of literature, arts, science and industry. Thus Damascus, Cordova, Granada, Baghdad and Cairo became, from time to time, reputed centers of Muslim culture and held aloft the torch of light and learning, art and science in Asia, Europe and Africa, at a time when the West was sunk in ignorance and superstition.

Europe's indebtedness to Islam for her scientific progress is much greater than she cares to admit. She remained barren of all progress as long as she was under the heel of the Church. Even the intellectual development that had taken place among the Greeks and Romans disappeared under the persecution of the Church. During the centuries of moral and intellectual stagnation of Europe, it was the Muslims who led the vanguard of intellectual progress in the world. There was a time when learning in Europe could be obtained only through the medium of Arabic tongue. The very Renaissance, that awakened her from her long lethargy, was brought about by the impact of Islamic culture and learning. But for the conquest of Spain by the Muslims, who knows how long she would have remained in that savage condition. All her later achievements in the domain of science, art and learning owe their inspiration wholly and solely to the influence that emanated from Muslim Spain and penetrated the rest of the continent. All knowledge, whether Astronomy, mathematics, Physics or Philosophy of which later on the Europeans made themselves masters, was originally derived from the Saracenic schools. Besides, there has been hardly any reform, religious, social or political, from the time Martin Luther to that of Lenin, which does not bear the stamp of Islamic influence. Draper has very truly said, 'In whatever direction we look we meet the various pursuits of peace and war, of letter and science, Saracenic vestiges.'

Dr. Campbell, a reputed British scientist, in his book "Arabian Medicine" writes, "When Europe was lying torpid in the depth of intellectual obscurity and gloom in the dark ages, culture and civilization were spread in the Islamic States under the high personage of the Caliphs of Baghdad and Cordova, and at a time



The Qur'an insists that we observe, reason and contemplate to reach conclusions, which was in contrast to the Ancient Greeks who believed reason alone was the key to understanding nature, showing a distrust of the senses. But this was the foundation that 700 years of pre-Islamic astronomical study was built upon.

when the Barons and Ladies of Medieval Europe could not even sign their names, almost every adolescent boy and girl in Islam could read and write freely and with ease."

In the famous "History of Human Society", Professor Frank Blackmore of the University of Kansas writes, "In every country that was conquered, the first duty of Islam was to build a mosque in which Allah would be worshipped and His Prophet honored. Attached to this mosque was a school where people were taught to read and study the Koran. From this initial point they enlarged the study of science, literature and art, and, through the appreciation of these sublime things, they collected the treasures of art and learning wherever these could be found. From imitation they passed on to the great field of creation, and great advances were made to the sum of human knowledge. Schools were founded, great universities established, and libraries were built which laid the permanent foundations of knowledge."

The Muslims made phenomenal progress in Science, in a wonderfully short

time. They visualized, thirteen centuries ago, many things which were being discovered today. They explored and exploited the potentialities of objects which were unknown and unthought-of, since the creation of the world. In fact there was hardly any conceivable subject to which they did not give serious thought. They made most important discoveries in Chemistry, in Astronomy, in Mathematics, in Medicine. They specialized in History and Geography. They unearthed Alchemy and Algebra. They initiated and developed the study of Political Economy and Sociology which were unknown sciences till then. They made valuable researches in Zoology, Geology and Botany. Muslim students, accompanied by artists, travelled far and wide to study vegetations, which were minutely described by pen and brush. Alherin, a renowned botanist, travelled to and fro in India for forty years collecting materials for his studies. Besides, Muslims investigated and wrote on various other subjects such as navigation, agriculture, irrigation, gardening, statistics, chronology, and topography. Even aviation, the latest achievement of Europe and an early wonder of the twentieth century, was not left untried. The first two martyrs among the conquerors of the air were Muslims. In the reign of Khalifa Al Mamun, a scientist named Abdul Quasim invented an aero plane, but crashed when flying and was killed.

In the eighth century, the Abbasid Khalifas established the famous academy of Baghdad, where were translated the works of the renowned mathematician Euclid, Archimedes and Apollonius, of the astronomer Ptolemy and of the naturalists, Hippocrates and Diomedes. In this and other Muslim centers of learning Greek culture was kept alive at a time when, outside Byzantium, it had no abiding place in the non-Muslim world. Many were the libraries, observatories and laboratories that were established by Muslim kings. In the library attached to Baitul-ul-Hikmat, the abode of learning, a remarkable university founded by Khalifa Harunur-Rashid, there were many hundred thousand Sanskrit, Greek, Coptic, Chaldean, and Persian books besides those in Arabic. Khalifa Al-Hakim's library was so very extensive that its catalogue had to be prepared in forty large volumes.

Questions & Answers

Explain the highest moral character displayed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}

God, the Glorious, has addressed the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, in the words:

A *Thou dost most surely possess high moral excellences* (68:5). This means that all high moral qualities such as benevolence, courage, justice, mercy, bountifulness, sincerity, high mindedness etc. were combined in the person of the Holy Prophet. In short all the natural qualities of man as courtesy, modesty, integrity, benevolence, jealousy, steadfastness, chastity, piety, equity, sympathy, bravery, generosity, forbearance, endurance, bountifulness, sincerity, loyalty etc., when they are manifested on their proper occasions under the guidance of reason and reflection would all be accounted moral qualities. In reality they are the natural states and impulses of man and are designated moral qualities when they are exercised deliberately on their proper occasions. A natural characteristic of man is that he desires to make progress and, therefore, through following a true religion and keeping good company and conforming to good teachings he converts his natural impulses into moral qualities. No other animal is invested with this characteristic.

What are the two types of morals?

A Moral qualities fall under two heads. First, those moral qualities that enable a person to discard evil; and, secondly, those moral qualities that enable him to do good. Discarding evil comprehends those qualities through which a person tries that he should do no harm to the property, honour or life of a fellow being by his tongue or his hand or his eyes or by any other organ, nor should he design to do him such harm. The doing of good comprehends all those moral qualities whereby a person tries to benefit a fellow being in respect of his property or honour by his tongue or his hand or his knowledge, or by any other means, or determines to make manifest his glory or honour, or overlooks a wrong that

had been done to himself and thus benefits the perpetrator of the wrong by sparing him physical pain or financial imposition, or inflicts such chastisement upon him in respect of the wrong which is in reality a mercy for the wrongdoer.

What is the first of the four morals that deal with the forsaking of evil?

A The moral qualities that the true Creator has appointed for the discarding of evil are known by four names in Arabic which has a specific name for all human concepts, behaviours and morals.

The first of these moral qualities is called Ihthan, that is to say, chastity. This expression connotes the virtue that is related to the faculty of procreation of men and women. Those men and women would be called chaste who refrain altogether from illicit sex and all approaches to it, the consequence of which is disgrace and humiliation for both parties in this world, and chastisement in the hereafter, and dishonour and grave harm for those related to them.

What teachings has the Holy Quran given for the promotion of chastity for men and women?

A As this vice and its preliminaries can be practised by both men and women, the Holy Qur'an sets forth directions for both men and women in this context. It says:

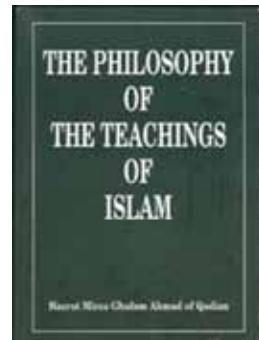
Direct the believing men to restrain their eyes from looking at women outside the prohibited degrees so openly as to be sexually excited by them, and to cultivate the habit of guarding their looks. They should safeguard all their senses. For instance, they should not listen to the singing or beguiling voices of women outside the prohibited degrees nor should they listen to descriptions of their beauty. This is a good way of preserving the purity of their looks and hearts. In the same way direct believing women that they should restrain their eyes from looking at men outside the prohibited degrees and should safeguard their ears against listening to the passionate voices of such men. They should cover

up their beauty and should not disclose it to anyone outside the prohibited degrees. They should draw their head-coverings across their bosoms and should thus cover up their heads and ears and temples. They should not strike their feet on the ground like dancers. These are directions which can safeguard against moral stumbling (24:31-32).

The second method is to turn to God Almighty and to supplicate Him to be safeguarded against stumbling and slipping. Another direction is: Approach not adultery (17:33).

Why has the Holy Quran not taught celibacy?

A People sometimes adopt celibacy or submit to castration and take up monasticism. God has not prescribed monasticism and that is why those who adopt it prove unable to conform to its discipline (57:28). This is an indication that if celibacy and monasticism had been imposed by the Divine, everyone would have had to adopt this discipline, in which case the human race would have come to an end long ago. Also, if chastity had to be preserved through castration or any other such device, it would amount to criticism of the Divine Who has bestowed this capacity upon man. Besides merit depends upon restraining the exercise of a capacity on an improper occasion, through fear of God, and thus acquiring double benefit through its proper exercise. By destroying the capacity a person would deprive himself of both benefits. Merit depends upon the possession of the capacity and its proper regulation. What merit would a person acquire who has lost that capacity and has become like a child? Does a child deserve merit because of his chastity?



For further discussion on these topics go to Alislam.org. Search under library for the book, "The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam."

Flowers, beautiful flowers, children, humanity, lovely, love, life, embrace all – please! Don't let evil subdue us. Take from our minds the thornlike thoughts that torture us like bloodsucking leeches and demons of disenchantment. Free us of withering, despairing thoughts that inhabit our minds like the dull buzzing of dragonflies. Take from our hearts the veils of ignorance that we may walk in peace. Come soon – please!

Love opens the gates of truth and justice and the lips of flowers – yes, love while there is time, while the heart still struggles within, to love. The beating while we live is constant, that bleeding flesh within the chest. How long will it continue? A heart stops, another starts, it beats and bleeds within the chest, it whispers, it speaks the truth – listen! The soul, sometime staggering under life's challenge, is straining every unseen fiber, then desires and fears are seen no longer; the soul is but a stillness somewhere in space. The heart speaks to the soul. Listen to this internal dialogue. See with the eyes of the heart; Listen when it speaks, for the heart is born pure.

The waves of life scatter the winds of time. Shreds of life are floating along in time. Loveless moments are to be avoided.

When the soul looks out of its body, it should see only beauty in its path. These are the sights we must hold in mind, in order to move to a higher place. Time after time in our hearts and soul we find love. No static, no pain – so pure, so happy to be alive. Waves of love consume us.

We find no hatred – just love for all.

News, Views and Reviews

One Mosque in Chantilly: Two Crazy Acts

HUFF POST RELIGION

By Dr. Faheem Younus

February 15, 2012

People do crazy things for religion

Take for example hundreds of families belonging to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Chantilly, VA, trying to self-fund a mosque for the past decade. In an extremely friendly lending environment, the women from these families sold \$500 dresses, their husbands made \$5 kabob rolls, and their children cooked \$.50 brownies to raise funds. And the Community's executives, instead of lobbying governments for petrodollars, dug into their checkbooks to donate -- urging others to reciprocate.

Well, on the eve of Jan. 29th, someone went crazy at this under-construction mosque in Chantilly VA: it was vandalized. All the custom glass windows on the first floor were shattered, leaving behind rocks, beer cans and a financial damage of \$60,000.

There is a bright line distinction, though, between both crazy acts: one is driven by knowledge and love, while the other by ignorance at best, and hatred at worse.

This is not the first time such ignorance (or hatred) was directed at a mosque. Google the term "mosque vandalized" and you find 244,000 results. Just within 10 days of bin Laden's death, three mosques were vandalized in New York, Maine, and Portland; so one more in Virginia is hardly ground breaking news.

What is news is the fact that we still know so little about these Muslims. Who are they? Why do they want to come to "my" community?

As an Ahmadi Muslim, allow me to tell you who we are.

Since 1924, members of the oldest Muslim organization in America have advocated loyalty to one's country of residence. Instead of religious extremism, they are focused on education -- hailing the first Muslim Nobel Laureate (in Physics) in 1979. Instead of male



chauvinism, Ahmadi Muslim fathers empower their daughters, helping them to win Rhodes scholarships. And instead of confused pessimism, this community commemorated the 10th anniversary of 9/11 by raising more than 10,000 units of blood in collaboration with the American Red Cross. Pretty crazy, right? Or call it "Psychicemotus," if you want to use a fancy word from the Grammy award winning musician Yusuf Latif 's album, also a respected member of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA.

On the topic of vandalism though, a thought may cross someone's mind about the brutal church burnings and atrocities committed against minorities in Muslim countries. It's shameful. It's contrary to what Islam teaches, "Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated (22:41). Therefore, the Ahmadiyya Muslim community has publicly denounced such horrific acts.

I wonder how a mutual understanding of each others' belief would impact the minds of those who vandalize a house of God; no matter whether we call it a church, synagogue, temple, or mosque.

But all is not lost in this battle against a pocket of ignorance. As the word spread, not only that other Muslims reached out to help but local churches also extended notes

of sympathy, synagogues expressed support, and non-Muslim friends asked where to send a check. Look at the largest mosque in Northern Europe and one of the largest mosques in North America , both self-funded and belonging to the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, and one thing is clear: We seek your prayers, not payers, to take this peaceful mission forward.

The perpetrators left the crime scene in dark, but it's heartening to see our nation and its constitution standing by our side in broad daylight. Stones can shatter a glass window but they cannot touch our iron resolve.

We are coming to Chantilly, VA to join hands with anyone interested in making this world a better place. Whether that is by feeding the hungry, providing free medical care to the indigent, cleaning a highway, or raising a good child. We are coming to Chantilly, VA because it is our community too.

Steve Jobs famously said, "We're here to put a dent in the universe." A universe plagued by hunger, disease, poverty -- and so much tumult. Throwing rocks at a mosque or whining about them, only puts a dent on our nation's face. We are all better than that.

Let's join hands as neighbors and pledge to go crazy -- good crazy -- and make that dent in the universe.

News, Views and Reviews

In Satellite Town Rawalpindi, 'Ewan-e-Tawheed' is in place for the last 17 years. It is the property of Jama'at Ahmadiyya and is used as a place for prayers ever since. Some adventurists have decided to make it an issue and have started a false, baseless campaign of hatred to create problems. There are no concrete issues as such as the miscreants keep coming with new allegations one after another.

The bottom line is that miscreants want to deprive the Ahmadis of their right to pray and congregate. The miscreants gave an open warning to demolish the 'Ewan-e-Tawheed' on January 29, 2012, also they will not allow this Friday prayers at 'Ewan-e-Tawheed'.

The Ahmadiyya community is under attack and there are known security threats

to community members from these miscreants. Yet innocent and peaceful Ahmadis are

not even allowed to defend or protect themselves," read a press release from the Ahmadiyya community.

January 29 is also the date of birth of Pakistan's only Nobel Laureate, Dr Abdus Salam, who was also an Ahmadi. It was tragic to see that on his birthday, a huge rally was organised to terrorise the Ahmadiyya community. We, in Pakistan, really do not know how to honour our heroes and we are not known for protecting our minorities either.

In 1974, Ahmadis were declared non-Muslims in Pakistan through the Second Amendment under the Bhutto regime. When General Zia came to power, he brought about even more draconian anti-Ahmadi laws. For decades now, their persecution at the hands of bigots has largely been ignored because of these laws. Defending the rights of the Ahmadiyya community is considered an anathema in our society.

On 28 May 2010, two Ahmadi mosques were attacked by terrorists in Lahore and 86 Ahmadis were martyred. Apart from a few politicians, nobody was willing to condemn the attacks in unequivocal terms. (Late) Punjab Governor Salmaan



Taseer was the only politician who condoled with the Ahmadiyya community. Such is the state of affairs in Pakistan. Even after the 2010 attacks, many Ahmadis have been threatened and killed because of their faith. The seeds of religious extremism sown over the years now run deep in our polity. It is horrifying to see the way the peaceful Ahmadiyya community is targeted every single day.

Amir Liaquat, a televangelist, spouted so much venom against the Ahmadiyya community in one of his programmes a few years ago that it led to the killings of Ahmadis; yet he was not held accountable. Anti-Ahmadi banners can be seen in many cities at the busiest of squares and yet no government official has ever dared to take them off despite the fact that hate speech is a criminal offence. It, of course, goes without saying that the state has no business to declare anyone a Muslim or a non-Muslim. Over the years, many Ahmadi families have been forced to flee the country.

On the one hand, we see the Ahmadiyya community being targeted while on the other there is a Shia genocide going on in Pakistan. Banned terrorist outfits like

the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) operate freely inside the country with impunity. Shia intellectuals are being killed systematically all over the country.

The people of the peaceful Hazara Shia community in Balochistan are being killed in throngs while our law enforcement agencies have turned a blind eye to the activities of these groups. The reason is simple: these groups are the proxies of the Pakistan Army. They were created and nurtured by the army for its own vested interests and this is why they are never indicted for their crimes. This is the same military that is carrying out a military operation in Balochistan -- thousands of Baloch are missing and hundreds of them have been found dead. The policies adopted by the Pakistan Army cost us half of our country back in 1971. Once again, due to its policies, we are on the brink of another disaster.

The international community treats us like a pariah state due to state-sponsored terrorism. The biggest victims of this terrorism are Pakistanis themselves. It is high time that we put an end to the military's highhandedness. The military must go back to the barracks and never interfere in politics. In order to save our country from the military's follies, the Pakistani nation must stand up to the military and its bigoted proxies even if it means putting our lives at risk.

The writer is Op-Ed editor, Daily Times, Pakistan. Reach her at mehmals@gmail.com

News, Views and Reviews

The Royal GazetteOnline

Constant fear of arrest or worse

February 10, 2012

I want to thank the members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community for their letter of January 23 in response to articles in The Royal Gazette about persecution that I, as an Iranian Christian, have experienced in my homeland of Iran.

Whilst I fully acknowledge those passages of the Quran, they were written at an earlier time in the Prophet Muhammad's life. Under the rules of interpretation or abrogation later passages supersede earlier passages from the Quran and it is those passages which are used by the clerics in my country as justification for the persecution and arrest of those who practice other faiths, and particularly those who convert from Islam to another faith.

Such passages include the exhortation to 'fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them' (Q 9:5) and to 'fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day.... Nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued' (Q 9:29).

I fully acknowledge that many Muslims do not apply these teachings in countries where they are in the minority themselves, but they have become the pretext for forcible conversions to Islam in the 20th century and even in this century in places such as Indonesia and in my own country. And even if there is technically freedom of worship for non-Muslim minorities they are not granted equal rights with Muslims.

They are classified as Dhimmi, having to adhere to restrictions designed to reinforce their second class status, including the payment of a special tax called jizya. I have experience of those who have found it impossible to get jobs, or promotions, or a fair hearing in the courts. This is so for those who were born Christian and Jew, for example, in the majority of countries where Islam is the

predominant religion. However under Shariah teaching of the haddith, apostates from Islam should be executed as part of the state law. This teaching is not universally applied, but is part of the state law in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Sudan, for example. It is the stated aim of Muslim radicals in such places to introduce Shariah as widely as possible in the world to create and Islamic state similar to Medina in Muhammad's time.

It is my experience in Iran that the state is seeking to root out and punish all those who they consider apostate, that includes my family. I really appreciate that the Islamic community in Bermuda is standing against this violence, and we would ask you to be a voice to speak out for the protection of non Muslims in other parts of the world. I would love to believe that most Muslims practise as you do, but sadly, my experience and the experience of Christians living in much of the Middle East is not this experience.

My hope is that in my country we could have the freedom to worship our God without fear of arrest in our own buildings, rather than having to hide in small numbers in homes with a constant fear of arrest or worse. This is the biggest wish of Christians living in countries where persecution exists.

Having said all of that I know that since the founding of Christianity, followers of Jesus have experienced persecution, as he did. Christians aim to live our lives like Jesus did, that is to forgive our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. (Matthew 5:43,44) We do this with all of our hearts as a daily act of worship. It is hard to experience persecution, and our hearts are broken each time we hear of a brother or sister who is called to suffer for their faith, but our hearts are also filled with a desire to forgive and to love even those who hate us. With Jesus we say 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' (Luke 23:34)

I want to close with a message to all who read this. What we are talking about are issues of ultimate truth. Jesus once said, 'you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free' (John 8:32). God loves us so much to give us the ability to make choices about how we live and who to follow. I want to encourage everyone to consider again the truth claims of Jesus Christ who embodies everything that is worth living for and even dying for.

In Bermuda you have this opportunity every day, please do not ignore it!

Thank you and may God bless you,
POUYA

Comment: I would like to bring some clarity into the verses that were mentioned earlier in regards to the Qur'an.

The verse (9:5) and the verses following provide clarity as to why Muslims are told to fight against the idolaters. The verse mentions a four month treaty so that non-Muslims can travel safely around Arabia and witness for themselves the transformations Islam brought about. Once the treaty has ended, Muslims are told to resume in combat long as the idolaters continue to hinder religious freedom. Also, (9:5) continues on with, "But if they repent and observe Prayer and pay the Zakat, then leave their way free. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful."

In regards to (9:29) there seems to be a misquote. Rather than 'fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day.... Nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued', it should be understood as following: "Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe not in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor hold as unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have declared to be unlawful, nor follow the true religion, until they pay the tax with their own hand and acknowledge their subjection."

This verse brings about a conditional clause which is only for the Jews and Christians that lived in Arabia who behaved like the idolaters mentioned in the previous verses that were at the time trying to exterminate Islam from existence. Muslims were, therefore, ordered to fight them until they agreed to live as peaceful and loyal citizens just like Muslims are commanded to be loyal to their country, irrespective of religion (4:60).

Yes, I do agree that certain groups within the Middle East and in other "Islamic" countries around the world deal unfairly with their non-Muslim constituents within their countries, but we cannot say that these actions are done so because they are mentioned within the Qur'an. These people do not have the verses of the Qur'an within their minds as they commit these atrocious acts, but rather attempt to falsely justify them after they are committed.

*Sources: Quran w/ 5 vol. commentary:
<http://www.alislam.org/quran/tafseer/guide.htm?region=El>*

News, Views and Reviews

Irrational fear of Shariah feeds prejudice

Silicon Valley
MercuryNews.com

By Dr. Nasim Rehmatullah
and Muhammed Chaudhry

Silicon Valley is renowned for innovation in software, social media and biotechnology -- all reasons why countless flock here to work and raise their families. But the Valley of Heart's Delight also boasts the best of pluralism, multiculturalism and interreligious cooperation, which is fertile ground for a serious discussion about the latest national debate: What is Shariah, and can it peacefully exist within America's legal system?

Critics increasingly question religious freedom rights for American Muslims. Many call Islam and America "wholly incompatible." While few understand what exactly they are banning, more than 20 states have discussed or passed anti-Shariah legislation. Some politicians are demanding that Muslims serving in the military be discharged, baselessly alleging that Shariah commands that "Muslims kill Americans." When influential politicians such as Newt Gingrich and Herman Cain demand that American Muslims take a loyalty oath or "repudiate Shariah" to receive equal rights, no one wins.

Muslims are now facing what American Jews, Catholics, Mormons, Italians, Irish, American Indians and African-Americans have suffered through: fear mongering and discrimination. This discrimination is real and directly affects our workplace. The New



Muslims are now facing what American Jews, Catholics, Mormons, Italians, Irish, American Indians and African-Americans have suffered through: fear mongering and discrimination. This discrimination is real and directly affects our workplace.

York Times reports that while Muslims make up only 2 percent of America's workforce, they filed nearly 25 percent of religious discrimination claims in 2009. Silicon Valley leaders must lead

Shariah is a set of laws and principles about how Muslims should lead their lives. Muslims use Shariah in private matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, worship and personal morals. Shariah is like the Jewish law (Halacha) utilized in Beit Din (rabbinical courts). American Jews routinely use Halacha for property contracts, divorces and business disputes. American Muslims use Shariah for the exact same purposes.

A "Shariah takeover" is impossible because the U.S. Constitution's Supremacy Clause ensures that the Constitution is always the undisputed sovereign law of the land. Likewise, true Islamic teachings promote a just, secular government with a separation of mosque and state. Far from a threat, Shariah actually champions the U.S. Constitution.

Barbaric practices such as death for apostasy and honor killings have as much to do with Islamic Shariah as slavery and lynching have to do with Christianity and Jesus. Nothing in the Qur'an or in Prophet Muhammad's example legitimizes such injustices.

Even in Muslim majority countries, introducing the Islamic penal code is not accept-

able until the society first willingly immerses itself in the spirit of Islamic values and morals.

This debate affects Silicon Valley because we pride ourselves on multiculturalism. In 2009, the Council for a Parliament of World's Religions recognized our pluralism, designating San Jose and Santa Clara County the prestigious "partner city" status. As candidates attempt to distinguish themselves this election season, now is our chance to show that we still deserve the "partner city" honor. We must ignore the anti-Shariah rhetoric and instead look at the facts.

Silicon Valley can be our nation's loudest and most educated voice with a true understanding of Shariah. Let us actively condemn candidates using Shariah as empty rhetoric to garner votes, when the real focus should be to build and sustain a virtuous society with excellent morals, job creation and improved education.

One example of modern-day Muslims who demonstrate a balance is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community -- Muslims who believe in the Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. They present to the world a true and practical Islamic model. Through its leadership, Khilafat, this community is establishing a society that adheres to the rule of law to ensure peace, security, justice, equity and prosperity for mankind.

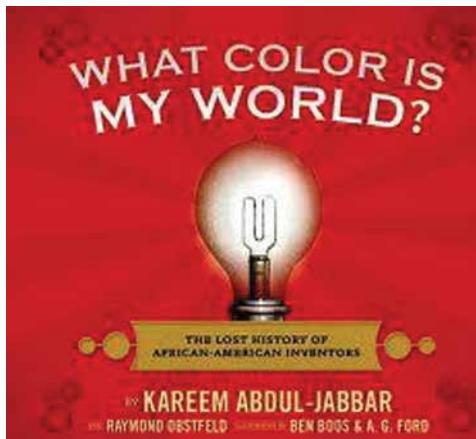
Book Review

What Color Is My World? The Lost History of African-American Inventors



By Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and
Raymond Obstfeld
Reviewed by Hasan Hakeem

Ie is the NBA's all-time leading scorer, with 38,387 points. During his career with the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks and Los Angeles Lakers from 1969 to 1989, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar won six NBA championships and a record six regular season MVP Awards. In college at UCLA, he played on three consecutive national championship teams, and his high school team won 71 consecutive games. At the time of his retirement, Abdul-Jabbar was the NBA's all-time leader in points scored, games played, minutes played, field goals made, field goal attempts, blocked shots, defensive rebounds, and personal fouls.



Since his retirement in 1989, NBA legend Abdul-Jabbar has been involved in projects focused on African-American history and socio-economic justice.

He is also a best-selling historical author. His first book, his autobiography "Giant Steps," was written in 1983 with co-author Peter Knobler (the book's title being a homage to jazz great John Col-

trane). He authored "On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey Through the Harlem Renaissance," co-written with Raymond Obstfeld. His previous book, "Brothers In Arms: The Epic Story of the 761st Tank Battalion, WWII's Forgotten Heroes," co-written with Anthony Walton, is a history of an all-black armored unit that served with distinction in Europe.

Abdul-Jabbar's latest literary work, co-authored by Raymond Obstfeld, is a children's book entitled "What Color Is My World?: The Lost History of African-American Inventors," and was released early this year. It is the story of African-American inventors who impacted American life and world culture. The idea for the book came from his previous book, "Black Profiels in Courage."

"I did a whole chapter on Lewis Latimer, who discovered the filament for the light bulb that made it a practical item that everyday people could use. And in reading about his life, I discovered a lot of things about

African-American inventors of the 19th century,” said Abdul-Jabbar. “Lewis Latimer. You know, he was involved in things that are so crucial nowadays. He did Alexander Graham Bell’s patent application drawings for the telephone, and then he worked for Mr. Edison. He was a key for Mr. Edison’s success, and people didn’t know anything about him.”

It’s no secret that hard-working inventors have faced numerous difficulties in the past, including insufficient financial resources and poor access to information and communication channels as they designed new products, medicines, equipment, and gadgets.

Black Americans faced additional obstacles in the form of discrimination and legal restrictions by race as they tried to bring their innovative plans to fruition. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar carefully documents the challenges and accomplishments experienced by a number of relatively unknown black American inventors as they made influential contributions in the past two centuries.

He has done an excellent job writing about the personal backgrounds of these pioneers in science, medicine and industry. With its clear presentation, fun facts on the side, and a parallel story, young readers will gain a new understanding of the impact that these innovations have had on scientific progress and on our everyday lives.

The book offers a good opportunity to introduce readers to the concept of innovation and the idea that new inventions play an important role in improving societal well-being. Not only is this book beautifully written and illustrated, it shines a light on many deserving inventors whose important contributions may have been overlooked by history. It may inspire young and old readers to continue to dream, and lead them to many other ideas and innovations!

It is a beautifully illustrated book, nicely designed, with fold out pages and many fun facts about inventors.

These are stories of men who made amazing contributions against odds that would have discouraged lesser individuals. These stories prove that anyone can make astounding contributions if willing to put forth the efforts.

We begin our journey into this book through the eyes of two young teenagers who are tasked with helping a handyman—



Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

one R.E. Mital—clean up the dilapidated old house they’ve moved into. In just 36 pages (with the help of numerous fold-out flaps which provide additional information), Mr. Mital defuses their bickering and infuses them with excitement about the black inventors whose breakthrough ideas surround them.

The book’s story within the story adds texture and makes the read that much more interesting. Especially how it takes typical teenagers who are not necessarily interested in repairing a house or being educated outside the classroom and piques their curiosity. Then to enhance the story by bringing black inventors who are scientists and engineers to life adds additional depth.

All one has to do is read a few of these pages to realize that our world is painted in many different colors, one of those shining a radiant black lustre. We owe the authors a debt of gratitude for providing us with African-Americans who contributed greatly to our society.

Commenting on writing a children’s historical book, Abdul-Jabbar said: “It truly disturbs me to see yet another generation of black children who are not being correctly educated about our country’s history. Writing this book gives me an opportunity to reduce the amount of false information that affects the school kids in our communities. I found writing for kids very enjoyable, and it wasn’t any more difficult than writing to an adult audience.”

“‘What Color is My World,’ which is geared toward kids who are eight to 12 years old, has an interesting format with flaps that reveal interesting facts. In putting my book together, I wanted to try to have an element of interaction with the kids by having the fold outs. I felt that the readers would be given a sense of sharing that wasn’t possible if the book was just about turning pages.”

Hasan Hakeem, is president of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Zion, IL. and he is a member of the Muslim Sunrise staff.

Perspective

2012
DOOMSDAY



**It's the End of the
World as We Know it...
*Well, Maaaybeee***

Predictions about the end of the world have been around since the beginning of time, and in honor of that noble tradition, we are now confronted with the prediction that the world will end in 2012. I hope this article is not too late!

This time around, the gurus are using the Mayan calendar to support their beliefs. I have never understood why anyone would want their day of glory by predicting the end of the world. If they were to ever get it right, they wouldn't exactly have much time to celebrate. They'd be dead just like everybody else. On the flipside, if they didn't get it right, they'd join the long list of humiliated people who either messed up on their math, or were forced to admit they didn't have a clue. So, what's the point?

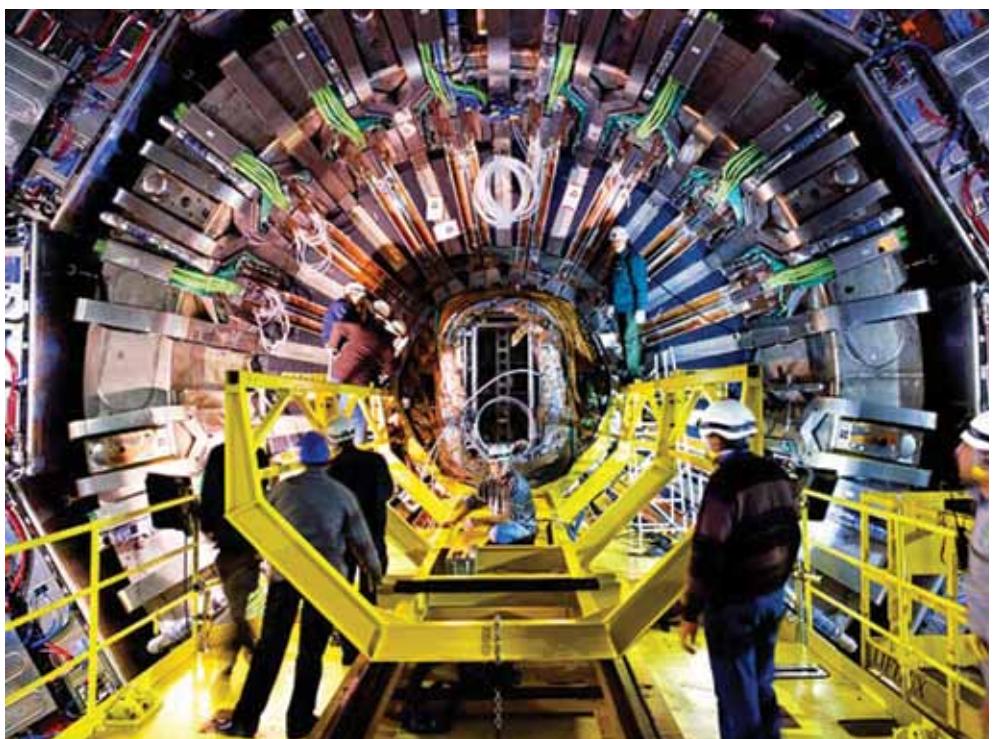
Some self-proclaimed prophets who predicted the end of the world forced it upon themselves in unfortunate and pitiful endings. Some became the laughing stock, whereas some committed suicide along with their sincere, but blind followers. Adding to the tragedy was the inclusion of the innocent lives of children.

We really don't learn from history.

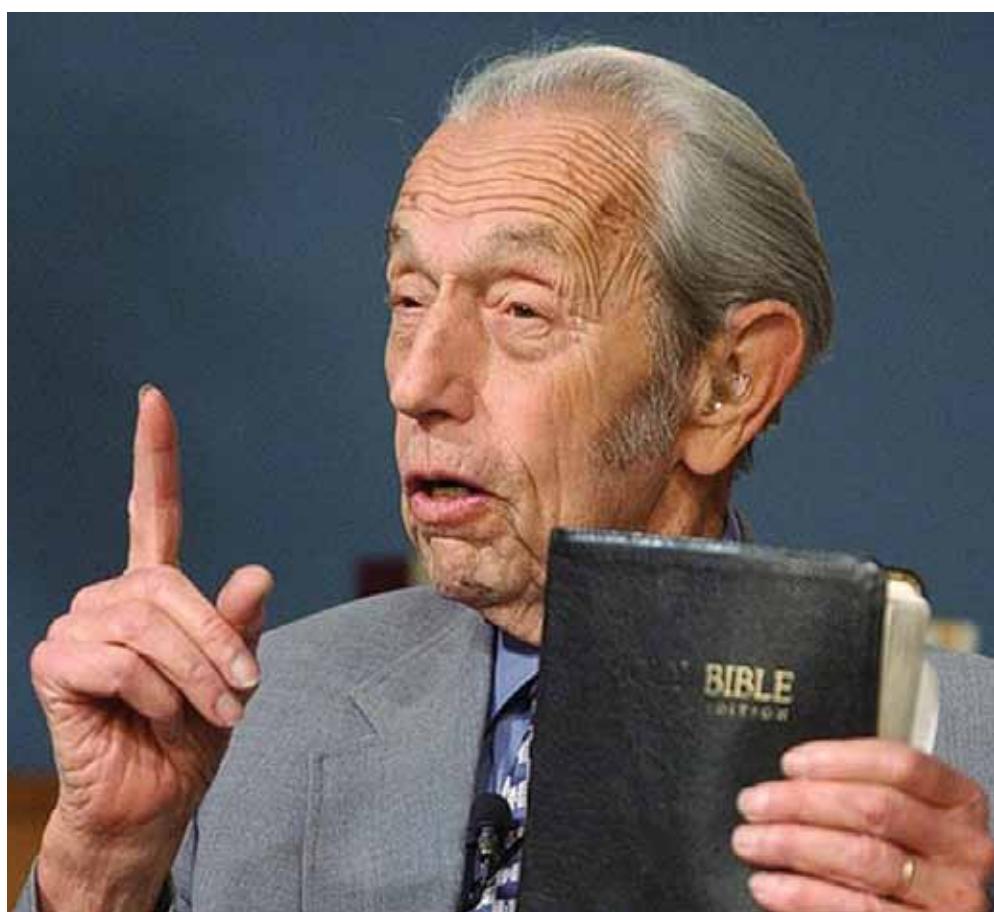
I'm also at a loss when it comes to lost nations such as the Mayans. They could not predict their own end. If they could and then they did, why wouldn't they have moved? I'm not a history buff so I don't know how or why they disappeared, although some of this issue's articles discuss this matter.

One thing I can say for sure is that if I knew of an up and coming catastrophe like an earthquake or a flood, I'm headin' out of town. Maybe they didn't believe in their own predictions and left it up to the people of the 21st century to glorify them. Once again, if the world is really going to end soon, it doesn't matter who predicted it because their day of glory will be their day of destruction.

As if we didn't want the luxury of waiting for that fateful day, nations have eagerly sought the development of weapons of mass destruction. With the advancement of human evolution of thought has come the most creative ways of destruction. We invent new and improved ammunition, bigger bombs and all kinds of secretive weapons to oppress others. It's technological terrorism where *might is right*. Be our friend or we'll blow



When the Large Hadron Collider fired up in Sept. 2009, some critics speculated that the world's biggest atom smasher could spawn a black hole that would mean the end of the world.



For followers of radio preacher Harold Camping (pictured in December 2002), doomsday was expected to arrive May 21, 2011. The end-of-the-world prediction was just the latest in a line that stretches back centuries.

your head off...and we'll make it as easy as playing an arcade game. What a way to win the hearts!

America has so much to offer to the world when it comes to technology and invention of products to help mankind. Instead of impressing others with the dream of life-giving innovations, we sell bombs, missiles and chemical weapons to dictators whom we later declare as our enemies. In the process of becoming a country capable of destroying the world many times over, we have prepared others to have the same capabilities. It begs the question whether nations bond with us in friendship or fear! In Islam we were forewarned about the AntiChrist, or *Masih ad-Dajjal*, who would harness such tactics.

Complementing these are Latter Day prophecies about wars and famines in the Bible, the Holy Qur'an and other scriptures. The prophecies in the Holy Qur'an are not to scare us to death, but to prompt a spiritual reformation. Every one of the prophecies is conditional. Every incendiary warning issues a fragrance of hope - a way out.

We could avoid all that despicable and fearful destruction by changing our behavior for the better and develop a relationship with God. Unfortunately, history tells us these prophecies fell upon deaf ears. Sodom and Gomorrah are one example of many. The only wise people I can give credit to for taking advantage of this opportunity were the people of Nineveh, the nation of Prophet Jonah^{as}. They changed their behavior and it was wonderful that the promise of God came true.

Prophet Jonah^{as} was really sure that the destruction was going to come especially when he had to spend three days in the belly of the whale. When he came out and discovered that his enemies were still around, He realized the end of the world did not happen. He even complained to God. He found out that those enemies were his followers and friends living a new and improved righteous lifestyle, the way God wanted them to. Now that is a day of glory we need to work towards and one I can relate to.

It is not that important when the world is going to end. It is much more important what we can do to better our behavior. So even if the end were to come, we'd be much better off.



Photograph from Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Jehovah's Witnesses' Doomsday

Since its founding in the 1870s, the Jehovah's Witnesses, a Christian offshoot, had prophesied the end of the world in 1914 (pictured, a Jehovah's Witness family hangs posters in the 1930s).

Though doomsday didn't arrive in 1914, ever since then, the religion's followers have been predicting that the world will end "shortly," according to the 1997 book *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*.

If you asked me personally, I think the world is going to end the day I die. I wouldn't have to worry about the politicians pushing bombs to keep the weapons industry alive. I would not have to deal with trying to get along with problematic people. I would not be worried about the mortgage, the insurance, 401k performance, and the rising cost of college. *Hallelujah!!* I would be done with all this.

What the new world will hold I could not tell you. God has kept that to Himself. It must be better than this world. It would be the end of the world for me but the rest of the world would still go on as it has for

the last so many millions of years. Here is the amusing part: I don't even know when my end is going to come - so much for my trying to predict the end of the world for everybody else.

We should take note of the Ninevites when we hear the predictions of destruction and the end of the world. Odds are, we won't and it'll be a shame.

Falahud Din Shams

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